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STORIES FOR OUR GIRLS.

—♦—
SECOND SERIES.
—♦—

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STORIES FOR OUR GIRLS.

Second Series.

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SAVED:

A TALK OF

‘LONDON OVER THE BORDER.’

By A. M. GOODRICH.

‘MOTHER dear, it is of no use standing out longer,’ said Lydia Mellis; ‘we are almost starved. How can you talk of father getting back to work? It is no ways likely. I know very well you have both been kind parents to me, and never willing for me to work in factory, field, or vegetable-shed. But I shall just put on my worst frock to-morrow and go wherever there is best chance of earning some bread. We are almost starved!’ repeated Lydia, again.

Her mother’s face was white with want and woe. Her father lay groaning on a bed strewn with many thorns, planted by intemperance and improvidence, and hard to lie on now when a severe accident

kept him there all day and all night. The little children were dull and inert with hunger, and their clothes were so ragged that their limbs were half bare. Lydia, a fine, tall, resolute girl of sixteen, was resolved to bear this state of things no longer. She must be the bread-winner now, and, poor girl! she knew no other means by which to propose to win it than those she had alluded to. She had never been taught to sew, nor trained to service. She had not been treated unkindly in her home; at times, too, she had enjoyed plenty there. Jack Mellis when in work as a dockyard labourer received good wages, and spent them only too freely. Instead of acting on his knowledge that employment was not always to be had, and laying up on a fine day for the rainy ones so sure to come, he threw his money recklessly, and too often wrongfully, away. In the spring of the year his wife generally contrived to get back some of the articles pledged for food and fuel in the long winter; but experience taught no wisdom. The same course was run again, the same poverty incurred; and when, as now, sickness came too, what was the family to do?

‘I know what I will do,’ cried Lydia. ‘I will get some bread for us all; and not be ashamed either. Better do any work honestly, than sit here and see such miserable faces.’

Up she rose in the morning, and, according to

her resolution, proceeded to make herself look as like the untidy, dirty girls she daily saw pass to their work, by means of putting on her worst frock, leaving her brown hat at home, and twisting mother's rag of a shawl round her neck. Then she followed in the train. Poor Jack hid his face under the bedclothes, sorely grieved to see this happen for the first time, and his wife came into the house and shut the door.

Lydia was usually neither very clean nor very dirty, but when she came home that night her mother cried, and said she should not know her child. Still the thought of Lydia's earnings were so acceptable that no very strong objections were urged against her pursuing her course. No doubt the language Lydia heard on her way to work from the girls who had long worked there was often such as made her ears tingle and covered her with shame. The first day they jeered at her.

'What! you are coming to help us? Quite a fine lady! Look at her clean hands! It is not long she will keep them so.'

'Perhaps not,' cried Lydia, quickly; 'but I will get none but honest dirt on them, and that will wash off again.'

'You will know that by the end of the week.'

Still more confused and angry was Lydia at her reception on arriving at the huge vegetable-shed, which, with its outhouses, seemed the common

property of men, boys, and horses, and women and girls. The coarseness of her companions' jokes when she pleased them, and the roughness of their reproofs when she displeased them, alike angered Lydia. Scalding tears more than once coursed down her cheeks, and when she put up her hands to dash them away her face was soon smeared with dirt, and dyed strange colours with vegetable juice.

The work was to prepare vegetables by day, which at night were carried off to market skilfully packed in waggons. Lydia eyed with amazement the mountain of rhubarb which nearly filled the shed the first day she worked in it, and which was to be sorted and tied in those neat bundles in which the greengrocers offer it for sale.

Lydia went on with her work, hard and disagreeable as she found it, and no doubt the goodness of the motive which led her to undertake it in a great degree saved her from the moral evil of it. She did not go to seek a rough independence of her parents, but to help them in their trouble; and when we are in the right path we may take to ourselves the comfortable words of St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 13),—'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'

But if Lydia and her parents became in a measure reconciled to her present mode of life, there

was one who wished the girl well, who could not reconcile himself to it. As she was returning home one evening a little in advance of her companions she met Philip Slade, who was lingering purposely at the corner of Limehouse Row, where Lydia lived. She just nodded and smiled, and was passing on; but though he saw well she had no wish to stop, he would not refrain from speaking.

‘I am really sorry, Lydia, it should come to this.’ And Lydia, in appearing not to heed him, only urged him on to speak more strongly. ‘Are you really going along with these girls to the fields or the sheds, or wherever it may be that they learn such bold words and dirty ways, Lydia? Could it not be helped, my maid? There is one who would sooner work for you himself than see you work at this ——’

Lydia resolutely turned away her face from the young man, whose tone was at once so tender and so sorrowful.

‘Oh, Philip, don’t say anything to me about it! It was right of me to go to work when father was lying ill, and mother pulled to pieces by the children, and none to help but I. I know I was right, and I intend to keep on at it.’ Then, changing her tone, she added: ‘If there are any who think me not good enough to speak to for what I am doing, why they can let me alone. Of course your mother would not look upon me——’

‘I was not thinking of mother ; but why will you turn a deaf ear to what I did say, Lydia?’

‘Why? Because do you think I would leave father and mother to fight their troubles out by themselves? Do you think I would listen to such words, almost a child as I am? No, no; mother has taught me better than to be thinking of such things for many a year to come; and if they are not to be thought of, they had better not be talked of—better not for you, Philip, as well as for me,’ said the girl, a little softly; but immediately returning to her rougher manner, she said, ‘You go your way and I go mine, and if you don’t like my ways—and I don’t say they are to be liked, but I do say they are not to be helped—why, Philip, you know you need never exchange so much as a “Good night” with me again.’

Resolutely refusing to wait for the answer Philip eagerly strove to give, Lydia walked down the row, and closed the door of her parents’ cottage behind her.

Philip looked after her and said, ‘She is in earnest. She will go on as she has begun, and, of course, mother will hear of it. Well, she ought to say as I do, “A good daughter will make a good wife.”’

Lydia’s pillow was wet more than once with tears that night. Both father and mother could see plainly that it cost their child not a little to carry

out her determination; but neither knew how much harder the struggle was made by Philip's dissuasions. Mrs. Mellis had always affected to be both blind and deaf to their liking for each other, and to consider them as mere boy and girl, as in truth they were. She had seen too much of the misery of the early marriages so frequent in W—— to endure the idea of her daughter following her own foolish example; and Lydia, too, a girl of quick perception and strong sense, recognised for herself how unadvisable such rash conduct was. She had, too, a half-acknowledged belief that Philip would 'bide a wee for her.'

'And if not—if another girl can please him, let it be.'

Next morning Mrs. Mellis watched her daughter set out in a pelting shower, the skirt of her frock turned over her head and shoulders. She looked after her with tender regret, thinking to herself:

'Poor maid! I do hate this dirty, slaving life for her, that I do! But we have too many mouths just now to go unfed. Mrs. Slade once said Lydia would be a tidy girl for service, but I could not bear that, come what would. Let her bide at home: "home is home, however homely," I say. If she left it, she would be likely enough to come back to despise her mother and her mother's ways. I could not stand that. It never was the fashion for the girls of W—— to go to service, and I hope

it never will be. I don't suppose Lydia would like to leave home, whatever way things went.

This supposition would probably have surprised most people could they have seen what sort of place Lydia's home was, unhealthily crowded and dirty in the extreme. One very hot summer evening the girls from the vegetable-shed were trooping home, and in their way they passed the garden-gate of a small villa residence, of a better description than any other near. It was one of those sultry evenings when people crowd the open door and linger on the door-step. At the gate of Laburnum Lodge stood two ladies, whom none of the girls remembered to have seen before. They spoke a few words in a kind voice, which arrested the steps of some of the girls, while others pushed by and went on, partly because they were shy, and partly because they were rude. Among those who stopped to listen to what the ladies said was Lydia Mellis. Could it be possible that she heard aright? Was it not too good to be true? Were they really asking her in, all ragged, and dirty, and splashed, and stained, as she was?—really calling her within that pretty gate, beyond which were sweet-smelling flowers in blossom, and telling her she might come, and her companions with her, into that neat, clean room, and, if they would, seat themselves on the wooden bench placed, it seemed, on purpose for them, and they—that is, the ladies—would read

them something they would like to hear, 'Good tidings of great joy?'

'What can have kept you so late this evening?' cried Mrs. Mellis, crossly, when Lydia entered. She had felt uneasy at the girl's delay, because she knew it to be her habit to come straight back from her work, and steadily to refuse all invitations to go elsewhere than home; and in this she saw safety for Lydia, young as she was, and pretty as she was growing.

'Oh, mother, I had good cause to tarry!' cried the girl, with almost wild delight. 'It was so beautiful! it was so good! it was so kind!' And kneeling down by her mother, she repeated as faithfully as she could that portion which had been read to her of the history of the Lord Jesus Christ, who 'went about doing good.'

'And I believe, mother, it is just what they themselves came here to do.'

What could have led two ladies, possessed of small but independent fortunes, and of good family connexions, in a beautiful county of England, to become tenants of the little house called Laburnum Lodge in W——? Miss Cleveland and Miss Nora Clare were aunt and niece, and they could hardly have loved each other better had they been mother and daughter. They had lately been paying a visit to Mr. Harold, the clergyman of W——. They often listened with interest to his relation of the

many causes of evil in his over-populous district, and 'among them,' he said, with regret, 'I have none I can send out as district visitors, the sick lie neglected and unknown of.'

The ladies walked out together, sadly reflecting on the hard lot of the sick and poor of W——. Presently a board met their eyes, on which was painted, 'This desirable residence to be let, at a moderate rent.'

There was a pretty garden-plot round the house.

'Dear aunt,' cried Nora, gaily, 'this might suit us; we are in search of a house. Let us look in. What a help it would be to Mr. Harold to have us here; two district visitors at once!'

'Two among thousands, Nora,' replied the older and less sanguine lady. Still she did not stop her niece's eager hand as she knocked for admission at the door of Laburnum Lodge, nor did she check Nora's lively remarks as they went over the not incommodious little house, though they were of a nature to give rise to a hope in the owner's mind that they might become his tenants.

Nora always expressed to her aunt every passing thought of her busy brain without reserve, but she knew it would not become her to speak to Mr. Harold in the same unguarded manner, so not a word passed her lips about Laburnum Lodge, and her aunt made no allusion to their walk. Next

morning, before they quitted their chamber, Miss Cleveland said :

‘Nora, what should you say if I took all your wild words yesterday for earnest, and hired Laburnum Lodge for a year? Would your heart fail you?’

The young lady turned in surprise, the colour mounted in her face, she stood for a moment still, and then came towards her aunt, and with a grave and earnest look (a very beautiful look, thought Aunt Mary), she said :

‘No, aunt, I do not think my heart would fail me anywhere with you. I do believe we should be happy and useful here.’

Happy! that was a word poor Nora had not often used since her brother had fallen in battle in India, and it thrilled through Miss Cleveland’s heart to hear it.

‘I should like to stay here and try what we can do, or I should like to go quite away, for I cannot bear to hear of the wants of W—— and do nothing to help them,’ added Nora.

‘I am content to give this scheme of yours a year’s trial,’ said Miss Cleveland, smiling. Nora, smiling too, took her hand.

‘Was it really altogether my scheme, dear aunt?’

‘No, Nora, I will not lay the whole blame of it on you. And you are really willing to give this summer to W—— instead of Switzerland?’

‘Yes, aunt, I am,’ said Nora, resolutely.

And thus it came to pass that Laburnum Lodge found tenants, and those tenants a warm reception from the Vicar.

It was not a pleasant occupation on a hot summer’s evening to get together and teach a class of very dirty girls. And at last Nora exclaimed:

‘They must be washed before they are taught.’

But most of the girls lived too far off to go home to wash and return to learn, so Miss Cleveland had to provide means for washing on the premises. Then she said, looking round on them with satisfaction:

‘Now that your hands are quite clean you really might learn to sew.’

And one evening was for the future given to sewing, Miss Cleveland and Nora reading aloud by turns.

Soon after this the girls gladly accepted a proposal to bring as many pence as they could spare towards the purchase of tidy clothing. Poor Lydia had very few to bring. The beginning of her leaving off Sunday School was the mockery of the girls, because she came in the same frock she wore on week-days, Mrs. Mellis having no other to give her. Lydia could not bear the finger of scorn, so she gave up her school. From untidy habits many of these girls had fallen off from school and from church, and when Miss Cleveland spoke of a re-

turn to both but few gave assent, and some left off attending even her class ; but Lydia was earnest and true, and ever in her place, giving a most attentive ear to her good friends' teaching.

'I do like to see you come home of an evening, looking so happy, Lydia,' said her mother.

'I never was so happy before, mother ; you must never again speak of sorrow or regret at my having started to shed-work. I did it for the best, and God's blessing has been upon it all through. Think how these kind ladies met with me, and how they have taught me ; keeping me not only out of harm, but leading me on to good I never should have thought of without their guidance ! Why, mother, Miss Cleveland says that I shall be in her Confirmation-class in about six weeks !'

'Well, my girl, I don't gainsay your words. They are doing a great deal of good to more than you ; only I was thinking, now your father is well and in work again, you might bide at home.'

And these same words Mrs. Mellis said to Miss Cleveland next day, when she called to have a talk with her about Lydia.

'Would it not be a pity for Lydia at her age to be at home doing nothing ? I quite agree with you that she ought to go to some work less rough than that she is now following. I think she could easily be trained for service.'

Miss Cleveland was quite unconscious that her

words were giving great offence to Mrs. Mellis, who tossed her head and replied :

‘None of our girls ever go to service, ma’am.’

‘That is a pity. In the last reports of health it is said that domestic servants are much more healthy than needlewomen, sempstresses, and girls who serve in shops.’

‘Indeed, ma’am, I should not like my girl to go to service. There is not a girl in our place who goes to service,’ said Mrs. Mellis, hotly.

Miss Cleveland did not express her hope that this would not long be the case, but she quietly went on to say :

‘You know I am very fond of Lydia, and I should like to propose to take her into our house this winter, and to give her a little training. My maid would teach her well, and I think she would learn quickly. I hope always to have a young girl to train, and I should like to begin with Lydia. Will you think of this?’

‘No, indeed, ma’am, I will not!’ cried Mrs. Mellis, losing her self-command, in spite of her respect for Miss Cleveland. ‘I never will think of such a thing as sending my girl to be a servant. I beg pardon, ma’am, I know you mean kindness,’ she added, but it was in a resentful tone.

Miss Cleveland took leave of her, and Mrs. Mellis, on Lydia’s return, watched the girl closely,

to see if the same proposal had been made to her. She soon convinced herself that Miss Cleveland had made no attempt to steal Lydia away from her.

‘She has spoken first to me, and to me only; very fair and handsome, I must allow. I am glad she has not set the girl fretting and fuming. She might be wild perhaps to go to Miss Cleveland, and of course Lydia is a girl any one might be proud to get hold of; but I don’t choose her to go to service, and I shan’t mention the matter to her.’

In a few days Mrs. Mellis was overtaken by a fit of self-reproach.

‘It is very hard to keep anything a secret from Lydia, and especially when it concerns herself,’ she thought; so, to relieve her mind a little, she repeated Miss Cleveland’s words to her husband when he came home. When he got at the meaning of them he said :

‘I am sure we ought not to stand in Lydia’s way; she has been a good girl to us.’

‘Do you mean to say you would let Lydia go away to service?’ asked his wife, angrily.

‘Yes, if it were for her good.’

‘Let your girl go away to a distance?’

‘Well, I don’t know that this is altogether a place I would strive to keep her in,’ replied Mellis, thoughtfully.

His wife was not well pleased to find his opinions

so little in accordance with her own, and she began to fear that he might unawares let fall some word which would acquaint Lydia with what had passed between her and Miss Cleveland.

‘Better tell the girl myself,’ she thought; but she did not get through this task very well. She half asserted her authority, and her conviction that she had done everything for the best, and she half apologised to Lydia for not having consulted her. The girl’s quick temper and feelings caught fire at once. She suspected that her best friend had been treated with rudeness. She sharply rebuked her mother for having answered Miss Cleveland without speaking first to her.

‘I could have answered for myself,’ she said; and she chose to be sulky and distant with her mother for hours, and when alone had many a passionate burst of tears.

That evening Lydia and Philip fell in with each other; he had come back to W——, having quitted the gasworks, which disagreed with his health, and had taken to a rope-factory instead.

‘I am thinking of changing my way of life, too,’ said Lydia.

‘No wonder you are tired of your present way,’ said Philip; ‘it is not fit for a girl like you. Why, our factory-girls are much better off than you are.’

‘I believe they are,’ replied Lydia, in a tone of

hesitation ; 'but how could I get put on the list at the factory ?'

'Oh ! come on Monday morning and ask to be engaged, and get some one to speak a word to the foreman. I know they want hands now,' said Philip ; for it came into his mind, that if Lydia took work at the same factory as himself it could not but come to pass that they would see something of each other. He had lost none of his liking for her, though he ventured as little as ever to speak of it to her, and now masked his eager hopes as well as he could under the guise of calm advice.

'Do come, Lydia,' he said ; 'and remember, my factory is out-and-out the best.'

Lydia was much inclined to be of Philip's opinion, and did not care to inquire too closely into the grounds for it. She returned home with a mind made up to act for herself without saying a word to any one.

'Mother did not speak to me, and I shan't speak to her.'

Nor had Lydia any wish to close with Miss Cleveland's proposal. She shared her mother's dislike to the thought of service.

On Monday morning Lydia appeared at the factory, with several new hands, and was engaged. That evening Philip walked home with her, and he thought this might happen most evenings.

When Lydia said she had not yet told her mother

of the change she had made, Philip, who always looked upon Mrs. Mellis as his enemy, felt a fear that Lydia would soon hear her mother forbid the walk he had been looking forward to with so much pleasure.

‘I expect mother will be displeased and order me to give up the factory,’ said Lydia.

‘Why?’ cried Philip, angrily; ‘and why are you always to be ordered by anybody? I thought you had too much spirit for that.’

Yes, he was willing to teach her disobedience to her mother rather than be disappointed himself.

‘I am a factory-girl now, mother,’ said Lydia, throwing down her bonnet, and striving to speak with saucy carelessness.

‘A factory-girl! Since when?’

‘Oh! since this morning.’

‘And without one word to me!’ cried her mother, angrily. ‘Fine lessons of obedience you learn at your class! I wish these ladies had never shown their faces in W——, if they are come to set daughter against mother.’

Lydia stepped forward.

‘Mother, don’t say such things! No girl learns anything but good from the ladies, and it is you who have taught me to do for myself by keeping things back from me.’

‘And why were you walking with Philip Slade? I am sure I have warned you enough about that

nonsense,' continued her mother, in a tone of increasing anger; 'and now you go to the factory to meet him!'

'I shan't walk with him any more, and my taking to the factory had nothing to do with the thought of walking with him,' replied Lydia, proudly, and not another word would she speak. Next morning she told Philip her determination.

'Then you mean that you will never find time or place for a friendly word?' asked Philip, as if both surprised and indignant.

'You know my meaning,' said Lydia, coldly; 'and I shall keep to it.'

But alas! it did not follow that because Lydia kept out of Philip Slade's company she was always in safer or better. There was a great variety of character among the factory-girls; some were truly respected and others lightly esteemed: between these two extremes was every grade of prudence and imprudence in conduct. Unfortunately for Lydia, a bold, artful girl, of the name of Sally Tummons, took a fancy to her. In fact, she wanted as companion a new-comer who knew nothing of her and her ways, and Lydia, now she had set up to judge for herself and consult nobody, easily fell into the snare.

Philip wondered when he saw the companion whom Lydia had preferred to himself, and thought, 'I am sure it can't be better for her to be with Sally

Tummons than with me. How can she fancy that? My poor girl! I suppose she won't always hold out after this manner; and she seventeen, and I going on for twenty! It would break my heart if, just out of her obstinate resolve not to listen to me, she got into such company as would do her an injury.'

Poor true-hearted Philip did long to guide and guard his Lydia; but she, firm to her resolve not to get into all the miseries of a too-early marriage, steeled her heart to him, and did not see that other dangers might beset her path. Philip resolved to speak, if possible, to Miss Cleveland, of whom he had heard; and as he walked along meditating on this design he saw one of the ladies in advance of him, and quickening his pace, he addressed her respectfully as soon as he gained her side. The young man's earnest face and voice at once arrested Miss Cleveland's steps, and engaged her attention.

'May I speak a word with you, ma'am?'

'Certainly.'

'I believe, ma'am, it is you who teach the girls' class in the evening. It is very kind of you. I am sure you wish right well to the girls of W——; and ——'

'You have a sister, perhaps, whom you wish to join us?' asked Miss Cleveland, kindly.

Philip reddened. 'No, ma'am; I have no sister. I am mother's only child. But, if you please, there

is a young girl that you have been kind to—Lydia Mellis—and I know she thinks a great deal of a word from you, and nothing at all of my words, though she has not a truer friend.’

Miss Cleveland saw Philip’s moistened eyes, and said, ‘What would you have me speak to her about? I see you think she wants a little counsel; and you are quite right in believing that I am much interested in Lydia.’

‘Well, ma’am, it is just this: that she should be careful, now she works at the factory, what company she keeps among the girls there, and not to take up with Sally Tummons, and the like of her.’

Philip touched his hat and turned quickly away, before he could hear Miss Cleveland’s promise to see Lydia. That lady, wishing to lose no time, went at once to Mrs. Mellis.

‘So Lydia has changed her work from the field to the factory! Do you think it was better for her?’

‘Indeed, ma’am, I don’t know,’ replied Mrs. Mellis, in a somewhat offended tone. ‘I never knew anything about it. She did it quite without consulting me. I don’t fancy girls do think of consulting their mothers, with all their new teaching!’

Miss Cleveland felt the unjust meaning of this speech, spoken rudely enough. In fact, Mrs. Mellis—angry with Lydia, dissatisfied with herself—regarded Miss Cleveland as the origin of the

discomfort between them, and had lost the cordiality with which she had once regarded her.

Miss Cleveland, after a few moments' quiet consideration, replied : 'Do you think, Mrs. Mellis, that the untaught girls of W—— consult their parents before they decide where they shall work and what they shall do? I consider it one of the crying evils of this place that they so easily assume independent habits. When first I began to teach your child she could not say the Ten Commandments, one of which is "Honour thy father and thy mother." One of the first texts I gave her to get by heart was, I remember, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is right ;" and I am sorry that, in this instance, she has forgotten my teaching.'

'Well, indeed, ma'am,' said Mrs. Mellis, a little softened, 'I dare say you mean well to Lydia ; but I can't forget that you wanted to take her quite away from me, and I think children ought to stay with their parents, and to know that they are their best friends.'

'But your daughter has to earn a livelihood ; you cannot keep her in idleness. I certainly did not wish to take her without your consent, and you know that I never made any proposal to her when I found you unwilling to listen to a plan which I thought so much for her good. Did Lydia wish to come to me?'

‘Oh! as for that,’ said Mrs. Mellis, tossing her head, ‘I don’t for a moment think that Lydia would go to service, but still this has made trouble between us.’

Lydia never forsook her class, but she had an uncomfortable feeling that there was not quite the same openness between her and her kind teachers as there had been; and on the next Sunday evening, when Miss Cleveland drew her aside to speak to her apart, she felt a little confused and ashamed.

‘I am sorry, Lydia, that you changed your employment without consulting your mother,’ were Miss Cleveland’s first words.

Lydia did not quite know what to say; so she said, ‘Are you, ma’am?’

Miss Cleveland took the girl’s hand, and looking her in the face, said, ‘Are not you, Lydia?’

Lydia dropped her eyes.

‘Well, ma’am, perhaps I am; but mother ought to have told me what you said to her about me.’

‘My dear Lydia, there must not be these *oughts* between mother and child. Is this to honour your mother? Was it not much more your duty to submit your wishes to her consideration, and to ask her advice and consent to them, than hers to put before you a proposal which she did not mean you to follow?’

Lydia looked ashamed, but she said: ‘All the

girls come and go to the factory as they please, ma'am.'

'I hope not all, Lydia; I wish that none who have parents did so. Besides, Lydia, is it not the purpose of all Bible teaching to make us like the few, not the many? I want you to learn to do what few do. I was in hopes you were learning this lesson. You know, Lydia, that Miss Nora is looking forward to having you in her Confirmation-class next quarter.'

Lydia knew that her quarrels with her mother untuned her mind, as it were, for thoughts of religion and earnest resolve to walk in its 'ways of pleasantness and peace.' She felt thoroughly out of sorts, and went to her work displeased with everything and everybody; perhaps, at the bottom of her heart, most of all displeased with herself. While she was going over, again and again, in her mind, her various causes of annoyance, she did not attend to the dangers which surrounded her among the machinery in the same way that a more experienced worker would have done. Somehow—she never knew how—the pin came out of her little shawl, and the comb out of her long brown hair, and both were fluttering loosely in the strong current of air which burst in just where she was standing at work, and in a moment both were caught by part of the machinery. A sudden whirl—a terrible wrench!

‘Is she killed?’ was the piercing cry.

A young man, at the risk of life, sprang from a platform down into the pit where the wheel was at work, and rapidly cut through the leather which held it. Instantly the wheel was still. Those on the platform disengaged the girl from her horrible position, and in another minute Philip was at Lydia’s side, straining his eyes to catch a look at her white face and convulsed features.

‘Bring her in here,’ said Miss Cleveland’s clear voice, as the little procession passed her door, bearing poor Lydia stretched on a shutter. ‘Let the doctor see her here. Nora, go to Mrs. Mellis, and tell her quietly that an accident has happened to her girl; and bring her here if she can compose herself enough not to give interruption to anything necessary to be done.’

Fortunately the doctor arrived before the poor, distressed mother. He examined the girl carefully, and prescribed for her, delighted to have a listener so experienced and so intelligent as Miss Cleveland to receive his orders.

‘Of course,’ he said, ‘the brain has received a great shock.’

‘So I have been thinking,’ replied Miss Cleveland. ‘If you please, we will nurse her here. I cannot bear to send her to a home full of children, where there must be much disturbance, and we

may even save her the pain of a removal to a distant hospital.'

'You will have a heavy task,' said Dr. James.

'I think we can manage it, if you are not afraid to leave her to us,' said Miss Cleveland.

'I shall be very glad to keep her undisturbed for the present,' replied the Doctor. 'She can go to a hospital later, if necessary. Now it is a great point to keep her quiet.'

When Mrs. Mellis arrived, instead of recognising the extent of Miss Cleveland's kindness, she cried bitterly, and declared that she must have Lydia at home. First to pacify her, and then to persuade her, was Nora's business.

When Philip Slade came home, late in the evening, to learn the latest news of Lydia, the delight with which his face beamed on hearing that she would be nursed and cared for by the ladies was a recompense for all the anxiety of the past day. He could not bear to hear one word about the courage he had himself displayed.

'As if I had thought of any but one life then !' he exclaimed, and, turning away, hid his face in his hands, in a burst of uncontrollable emotion. At length he spoke again, to add,—'And did not I help to bring her to the factory ?'

The labours of the ladies were soon lightened by the good success which attended them. First

came the knowledge that Lydia was out of danger ; then her daily improvement, not without occasionally falling back. At length came the time to consider what next to do for her, pale and weak as she was.

‘I hope, ma’am,’ said Mrs. Mellis, tears streaming down her face, ‘you don’t think I could be wicked enough to refuse you Lydia, or anything now ? My husband is always saying we never can do enough to show our gratitude—and our love, if you will excuse such a word, ma’am.’

‘Excuse, Mrs. Mellis ? I thankfully accept it, and fully believe in it. Does not God welcome love ? Does He not ask for our hearts ? How can His creatures, then, do other than rejoice in such a gift as love ?—But Lydia is not a *thing*,’ added Miss Cleveland, smiling, ‘and cannot be given without her own consent. The first thing I propose for her is a month at Weymouth, where Mrs. Lane, a friend of ours, has opened a Sea-side Home. There she will, please God, recover her strength, and come back to us the fresh-coloured, hearty girl she used to be.’

When poor Lydia was asked her wishes for the future, she said, trembling : ‘Indeed, mother dear, I never can bear to think of the factory again, or the rough work I did before I went there, if only it please God to show me a way out of it. I know I ran into my great danger all of my own wilful

will, going off to the factory without asking your leave. I am sure it would seem a sort of paradise to me now to serve the ladies. I never can serve them as they have served me : nothing too troublesome, nothing too mean for them to do for me—and cross and fretful enough I know I was at times !’

‘Oh ! you could not help it, my child : both the ladies say how patient you were.’

‘Well, mother, I should not have thought it !’ said Lydia.

‘I never did mean a child of mine to go to service ; and as to the factory, I quite forgive you,’ continued her mother : ‘but in your case it is different. You are too young to be married—indeed you are, Lydia ; and the ladies are quite of my opinion, I can tell you.’

‘Well, mother, I have never gainsayed your words on that matter. Of course I never shall marry any but Philip, and I suppose he knew that before he saved my life at the peril of his own ; so I have nothing more to say to him—nothing more to give him—than I had before, which seems very ungrateful. He always had my heart.’

‘And he shall have your hand, too, with my consent and your father’s, before very long, my child. You must not fret. It would be no kindness to give him a young, sickly girl for a wife : you must get strong and well first.’

Lydia saw that her two friends were of her

mother's opinion also ; and when she took leave of Philip before starting for Weymouth she told him she meant to abide by what they thought best, and he must submit without a word, for he would kill her if he teased her the least bit in the world, she was quite sure of that. Poor Philip was forced to keep silence, and all the reward he got was leave from the ladies to see Lydia safe off by the train next morning.

When Lydia's month was nearly out Mrs. Lane wrote to Miss Cleveland to propose that, instead of returning to W——, Lydia should remove to her own house, and become her under-housemaid.

'She would have the instructions of an excellent upper servant,' wrote Mrs. Lane. 'The air of Weymouth has agreed wonderfully with her. I like the girl, and would be willing to train her as a servant, if you consent ; but of course you have the first claim on her services. I shall not mention the subject to her until I hear from you.'

Miss Cleveland and Nora had been looking forward with considerable pleasure to having Lydia as their attendant—loving, grateful, and willing, as they knew she would prove. Still, they were alive to the fact that W—— was not without temptations for the girl ; and dismissing all thought of themselves, as they were ever ready to do, they sent for Mrs. Mellis, and recommended her to close with Mrs. Lane's offer.

Mrs. Mellis readily listened to their advice, and the consequence was that Lydia did not return to W—— for a whole year and a half, during which period, under Mrs. Lane's care, she had been confirmed, and become a communicant. The ladies were greatly pleased with her healthy looks and quiet manners, which did not at all conceal the warmth of her feelings.

She was come to see her mother, before taking a place as single-handed housemaid in the neighbourhood of Weymouth. Philip, of course, saw her, too, and Lydia seized the opportunity of begging him most earnestly to enter one of the Confirmation-classes.

'If I could only know that you were following on in the path I have been so happily led into, Philip! If I could only know that, while I am away!'

'Do you mean that anything could make me truer to you?' asked Philip, angrily.

'Well, Philip, perhaps not; but I do know that the love of a man who leads a godly life is worth ten thousand times more than the love of a man who forgets his God. It is you who ought to be my guide and director, if ever we are to be man and wife, and it would break my heart for you to neglect all I have learned most to value.'

'Why should I not learn what you have learned, Lydia?' said Philip, thoughtfully. 'I have been care-

less and neglectful, almost without knowing why. I will turn my thoughts to better things, and when you come back you shall find your words have not been forgotten.'

Philip was true to his word, and six years after the date of this story there was a marriage in W——, which was wanting in no one respect in all that befits a Christian union. On a beautiful summer morning Nora's hands prepared the pretty bride for the bridal; the young girls of the class strewed flowers on her path; her parents and Miss Cleveland accompanied her to the church, where they found Philip (at last to be rewarded for his patient affection), attended by the most respectable of the young men who worked with him.

The Vicar dismissed the wedding-party with his heartiest congratulations, and declared himself well pleased to number them among his parishioners. They entered into a comfortable home, provided suitably with all they needed, unburdened by a debt, for the provision made was paid for by the honest savings of both Philip Slade and Lydia Mellis, while many a pretty gift had been added by those who regarded them with affection and respect.

MABEL'S FIRST SORROW.

CHAPTER I.

“Who plucked my flowers?” the gardener asked, as he walked through his garden.

“It was I,” said the Master.

‘The gardener held his peace.’

‘No one cares for her as I do!’ thought poor Mabel, in the bitterness of her heart; and it seemed as if the very brightness of that early summer morning added to her sorrow. Why did the sun shine, and the birds sing, and all Nature rejoice around her, while baby, dear baby—her own, only, precious little sister—lay in her new-made grave in the churchyard close at hand? One little fortnight ago and baby was alive and well. How full of fun and life those two short years of hers had been! how dear to Mabel every recollection of them! She seemed to have the little one before her now, with all her pretty ways—all her delightful devices for

attracting attention. She could almost hear the little shrill voice calling to her, 'May, May, I 'ant you,'—a summons which Mabel knew must always be followed by a diligent and anxious search on her part; and that she must give vent to many expressions of wonder and concern at baby's disappearance until she would rush out, screaming with delight, from behind the old baize curtain, which was her favourite hiding-place. How proud Mabel had been of the darling! How fond she was of dressing the child in her white frock and blue ribbons, and of taking her to point at herself in the square glass over the chimney-piece in their best room! But all was at an end now,—

'The merry dance was over,
The little race was run;
And the mirror, which reflected two,
Could now give back but one.'

The last illness had been so sudden, so short, that the shock seemed yet hardly to have been realised. The child had died in Mabel's arms. 'May, sing "Joyful, joyful,"' said the little failing voice; and as the poor girl tried to do so, the spirit of little Bessie had gone to her Saviour.

Then came the funeral, with its service so powerful to comfort; and the mourners had felt their hearts drawn up from earth and earthly sorrow, and had realised the presence of Him who said, 'Their

angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.'

The next day was Sunday, when the quiet sadness pervading the little household seemed almost like happiness in the tenderness of feeling that was drawn out by it. Never before had our Church Service appeared to Mabel so full of beauty and of interest. She wondered how she could ever have joined in it with coldness or indifference, and her heart glowed within her as she repeated those wonderful words of faith and assurance, 'I *believe* in . . . the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.' The last quiet hour, too, before the family separated for the night—how full of sweet and tender comfort it had been! 'We must all try and live nearer to our God, and we must love each other more than ever for dear little Bessie's sake,' her father had said, as he drew Mabel very close to himself; while the mother put her arms round Tom and Willie, as though she feared to part with them. Mabel was nearly sixteen; Tom, the next to her, was only ten: but no child had been given between the two, and none had been taken away till Bessie died.

Before they went to bed the father had prayed so beautifully that none of that little family might be wanting when the Lord made up His 'jewels,' and that they might so 'pass the waves of this troublesome world,' that they should all come

'finally to the land of everlasting life.' With all her sadness, Mabel had a feeling of rest and peace such as she had never yet known before.

But with Monday morning a change seemed to come over everything. Father looked almost cheerful when he went away to his work; and though Mabel did hear him murmur to himself, 'Better off—better off—dear lamb!' which showed that he was not *forgetting*, she thought that he ought not to have whistled as he walked about the house. The young girl had yet to learn that a careless manner may accompany an almost breaking heart.

Mother, too, was sharper than ever in her ways. Mabel did not see the big tears which had to be brushed away, nor hear the sobs which now and then burst forth with uncontrollable violence; but she heard her calling out to Tom and Willie to be 'quick,' or they would be late for school, and that she should be 'very cross' if they came back with dirty pinafores. And then Mabel saw the little boys chasing each other down the lane as merrily as if no dead baby lay in her cold grave so close to them; and sitting down on a wooden bench, behind the tall yew hedge, she gave way to a fit of more bitter weeping than she had indulged in since little Bessie's death.

So violent was her crying, that Mabel did not hear the garden gate as it opened and shut again,

or the sound of a quiet footstep coming up the path behind the hedge. She did not know that for a minute or two a friend she dearly loved, Mrs. Amory, the Vicar's wife and her own teacher in the Sunday school, had been standing silently beside her, until at last her name was very gently uttered, and a hand tenderly laid on hers. 'Mabel! dear Mabel!' and as the poor child turned and caught the hand, as though she thought it would bring her strength and comfort, the lady added in a sweet, low tone of voice, 'Jesus said, "*Suffer* the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me."'

Then Mrs. Amory sat down beside Mabel, and talked to her long and earnestly; for some time without much response, but answers and even smiles were given presently.

'I came early, dear,' the lady said, 'because I felt how it would be with you to-day, and with your mother, too, poor thing! I must try and give her a little word of comfort before I go. It is the coming back to every-day life that is so hard: isn't it, Mabel?'

Mabel could only bow her head in assent; but she kissed the hand of her kind, sympathising friend, and held it lovingly.

'I know by experience, Mabel. If we could always live, as good old David Brown would say, "on Pisgah's mount," trial would be easy to bear. You know what I mean. You have felt, dear

child, during the past week as if our Lord had taken you apart, as it were, on a high mountain, above the worries and vexations of life. You have just seemed alone with Him and this your first great sorrow, and He has helped you to bear it. But now you have had to come down from the mount, and the Saviour seems further off than He was before; and there are duties to be taken up, and things to be done and thought about, to which you feel hardly equal. Your poor sore heart can hardly bear them yet. But, hush, my child!—for Mabel's sobs became almost hysterical—'if what I say excites you, I must leave off talking.'

'No, no!' said Mabel, 'I will be quiet, indeed;' and by a great effort she became so.

'Well, dear, it is our privilege and comfort to be sure that if indeed we have been *with* Christ on the mount, we do not leave Him there; or, rather, He does not leave us when we are compelled to come down again. He comes down with us, and hallows by His presence the commonest and most irksome of our duties. Peter, you know, said, "Lord, it is good for us to be *here*;" and wanted to build tabernacles on the mount apart from the rest of the world. But that was not to be; and his Master was as near to him when he rejoined the other disciples as He had been before. Was it not so?'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Mabel, softly.

'And so our Lord and Master will be with you ; for I think you love Him, Mabel. I think your Confirmation vows, so lately taken, were no mere form of words, but the sincere dedication of your young heart to Christ.'

'I think—I *hope* so,' was the tearful answer.

'Then never be afraid of *trusting* His love to you. Trust it entirely ; make it the one most real thing in your life. Let the words of that beautiful hymn which we have often read together be the expression of your heart :—

" O Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright reality—
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any earthly object seen ;
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie ! " '

'I do so well remember your reading that verse o us one Sunday afternoon,' said Mabel, 'and how poor Nellie Brooks cried, and said she wanted to "feel like that always." And the next Sunday she was dead.'

'I remember, indeed ! Dear child ! gone, I trust, to know the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Him who died for her ; for she was very earnest, though humble and diffident, in her religious profession. And little Bessie, Mabel—how much more she knows now

than the best and wisest of those she has left on earth !'

'It is so hard to feel that she is not here,' said Mabel, her tears breaking out afresh ; 'she was such a darling, and so winning in all her little ways.'

'Yet "*suffer*" her to be with Him, who loves the little ones of His flock. I always think there seems something so pleading in that expression of our Lord's. It is as though He meant it to go straight to the heart of all who mourn for little children. And it does so, too,' added Mrs. Amory. And then she was silent for a time, for she also had a little grave, which was very dear to her, far away among the Northern hills.

Much more passed between Mabel and her kind friend upon this subject, so full of interest to both of them ; and the words of helpful, loving counsel, sank down deep into the heart of the young girl. Before they parted, Mrs. Amory asked Mabel when she was going to a situation lately obtained for her as under-housemaid in a gentleman's family. It was to be her first experience of 'service'—at least, of that kind of service. Mabel had never yet left her home ; but she would have said she had long entered on a service which she could never give up. 'Next week,' she thought she might be sent for ; but it was still uncertain.

'Then I hope we shall, at any rate, have one

more Sunday together,' said Mrs. Amory, kindly. 'And, Mabel, heavy and hard to bear as this trial must seem to you, especially on first going among strangers, it may be, by God's blessing, the greatest safeguard you could have. You are so young, and the world—yes, even your little world—is so full of attractions, that there is danger lest the love of Christ in your heart should soon begin to wax cold, and the sense of invisible things become less lively. I do not say that sorrow will prevent this—only the continued grace of God can do so—but you will have this great help given you of beginning life with a subdued and chastened spirit, and with a warning so closely brought home to you that it is an uncertain life always—often a very short one.'

'You will pray for me sometimes, ma'am, won't you?' said Mabel, earnestly. 'I am so weak!'

'Never cease to feel so, Mabel, in yourself; but remember what St. Paul says,—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” I shall indeed pray for you; and I shall do so in the hope and belief that our gracious God is drawing you “by cords of a man, by the bonds of love,” into a closer union with Him who is able to keep you from falling. God bless you, dear child, and make you to feel a constant sense of His presence and His help. And, Mabel, from time to time it may be your lot to meet with those who are passing through heavy trial and sorrow; don't be afraid to

speak to them. None can understand suffering as those can who have suffered themselves. Try and comfort others with "the same comfort wherewith" you yourself "are comforted of God."

CHAPTER II.

"Thy Will be done !"
Four little words—no more,
Easy to say :
But what was felt before,
Can words convey ?

The struggle only known
To one proud soul,
And Him, whose eye alone
Had marked the whole.

But all is calm at last ;
Thy Will be done !
Enough—the storm is past,
The field is won.'

MABEL was to prove such a comforter sooner than she or Mrs. Amory had anticipated. She spent, as she had hoped, 'one more quiet Sunday' among her friends at Holmhurst, and then her father drove her in a hired 'trap' to her new place, and left her without saying 'good-bye ;' because, as

he told her mother when he got back at night, he had 'neither heart to wish nor tongue to speak it.'

Mabel's own heart was heavy enough as she now found herself, for the first time in her life, among entire strangers; but the novelty of everything around her very soon diverted her mind from its sad meditations.

Limecourt, though only a country house of moderate dimensions, was a very grand place to the young village girl, who had never been inside a more stately mansion than the Holmhurst Vicarage. Her fellow-servants appeared not a little amused at her looks and exclamations of astonishment; especially at her fears lest she should never learn to find her way about the various passages. Happily for Mabel, they seemed very kindly disposed towards the little under-housemaid; and though she thought them very grand, they were not at all such alarming personages as she had pictured them.

It was soon evident that the great theme of interest in the servants' hall was the expected arrival of a visitor, Lady Fosbroke. Her rank, her beauty, the absence of her husband on 'some great State business,' were all descanted on with eagerness; but what was most dwelt upon was her late heavy trial in the loss of three sweet little children in scarlet fever. Within eight days they had, suc

cessively, sickened and died, leaving her alone, childless, and almost frantic in her excess of grief. The lady's maid was the chief authority upon these points, as her mistress was cousin to Lady Foscroke, and had told her most of the facts. Some months had now passed since the death of the poor little children, but the mother was still weighed down under her trouble, and she had only, after much entreaty, consented to visit Limecourt upon the condition that she should meet no one there but her cousin's family.

'People do say,' added the talkative, though really very kind-hearted maid, 'that she has never forgiven God for taking her babies; but I don't, myself, think she can be so wicked as to feel like that. It's my belief the grief has been too much for her.'

'Never forgiven God!' How sad and terrible sounded such words in Mabel's ears! Of God's creatures, who needed so sorely His forgiveness—His daily, hourly tenderness and forbearance—could it indeed be that any entertained feelings to be so interpreted?

'It's all very well to judge other people, and it's very well for them to talk who have never known trouble; but only let it come to themselves and they begin to think differently!'

The speaker was one of the upper servants, a young woman of about three-and-twenty, with a

rather striking and handsome face. Mabel had noticed her before, and observed the restless, weary look and manner, which belonged to her; but they had not spoken to each other. The lady's maid, 'Mrs. Dashwood,' as the servants called her, answered, in a kind tone of voice,—

'Well, Janet, you have had trouble enough to make you sad, and sorry too; but still we know it's all for the best, and that, as I've heard my mistress say, the heaviest trial is often a blessing in disguise.'

The young woman rose impatiently. 'I've heard that kind of talk till I'm sick of it!' she said, and left the room.

A murmur, partly of sympathy, partly of disapproval, passed round the little group: Mabel looked inquiringly.

'She was engaged to be married,' was the answer, 'and the young man died of consumption. He went off so quickly that Janet was not even with him at last. She had no thought at all that he was so near death, and this seems to fret her more than anything. But we all tell her not to grieve; he was a good young man, and God has taken him.'

Mabel made no reply; but her whole heart went out in sympathy to the poor, sorrow-stricken girl. That evening she met her in a passage, and almost unconsciously yielding to a sudden impulse, said,

'I *wish* I could help you! Oh, I wish so much I could comfort you!'

Janet burst into tears. Those few words, fresh from the heart, touched a chord which all the well-meant efforts of her fellow-servants had hitherto failed to do.

'I have been in trouble,' Mabel added, when her own tears allowed her again to speak. 'I have had a sorrow of my own.'

'Yes, I know you have,' said Janet, 'and that makes you know the right thing to say; and you don't come talking about its being all for the best, and that.'

'But I think it *is* meant to make us love God more. Don't you?' said poor Mabel in a depressing tone, for she hardly knew how to reply.

'I don't know how it should,' was the half-sullen answer. 'I think I should have loved Him better if He had spared ——' She could not finish her sentence.

'He is waiting for you, Janet, as my little sister is waiting for me; and both are with the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Those were very simple words, but the artless, trustful manner in which they were spoken, took them straight to the heart of poor Janet. She turned and kissed the little comforter beside her.

'You are a good girl, Mabel Armitage,' she said, 'and I like you very much. I must not stay

longer now, but another time I should like to talk more to you.'

How earnestly Mabel prayed that night that God would give His own comfort to poor, sorrowful Janet Wood, and that He would Himself put a word into her own mouth when the time came for her to speak! Then she did the next best thing: she wrote to her friend, Mrs. Amory, telling her as well as she could—for Mabel was no great scribe—all about Janet and the sorrowing lady who was coming to stay at Limecourt. 'I know,' she added, 'that Mr. Amory can send a word of comfort, if anybody can, for he *always* has something for *every* body;' which remark caused some amusement in the little Holmhurst Vicarage.

A few days later, Mabel had finished what she called her 'house work,' and was sitting quietly at her sewing, in the cheerful, sunny room appointed for it. She was alone—not a very usual thing with her now—and her thoughts flew back to her dear home, and to the grave—that *little* grave—in Holmhurst churchyard. Whenever the sun shone brightly she thought of baby. Not that the little sister's memory was ever out of her heart, but what in itself suggested gladness could only remind Mabel of what now seemed to make a gulf between herself and all mere natural enjoyment.

It was the first week in July. She knew that Farmer Grey, whose field adjoined her father's

garden, would be just cutting his grass. She thought how she would have taken Bessie in—or, rather, how mother would have taken her in—to see the mowers; and how the little one would have shrieked with delight at finding herself suddenly covered with the hay. How busy she would have been, too! how useful she would have thought herself! ‘Bessie! darling Bessie!’ Mabel exclaimed aloud, ‘how *can* I live without you?’

‘Can I come in?’ said a voice beside her, and Janet Wood looked in, holding the door half open. ‘What! I must turn comforter to-day, I think,’ she added, catching sight of Mabel’s countenance. ‘Do you think we can be alone for a quarter of an hour?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Mabel. ‘I think the other housemaids will be coming in soon.’

‘Then I will just ask them not to come in for a few minutes. They will oblige me this once, I know.’

When Janet returned Mabel had dried her eyes, and put up a little hearty prayer for the help which is given to the weakest of God’s own children.

‘One cannot help crying a little sometimes,’ she said, with a half smile; ‘and I think it does one good—don’t you?’

‘I sometimes wish that I could cry more,’ said Janet; ‘but when I do cry my tears don’t give me much relief. They seem so bitter and so hot. I think they only take the strength out of me. But,

Mabel, I want to ask you a question : How *can* trial—I mean dreadful trial, such as some people have to bear—make us love God more?’

Poor Mabel ! how she longed for more wisdom, more experience ! Yet she could hardly have improved upon what she did say at last.

‘Well, Janet, at any rate I think it shows how much we *want* Him.’

‘But what is the use of wanting what we don’t get?’ was the impatient answer.

‘Not get ! Oh, I am quite sure we may always —,’

‘Always what?’ said Janet, as Mabel paused for the right expression.

‘Oh, Janet, I am so ignorant ! I don’t know how to talk about these things as Mrs. Amory—that’s my clergyman’s wife—would do ; but you know we have God’s own word,—‘Call upon Me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.’”

‘Well, of course that means trouble that we can be delivered from, like Daniel’s in the lions’ den ; but what about trouble that can never be got over ? what when the grave has got hold of all we cared for on earth?’ And then the ‘hot, bitter tears,’ of which poor Janet had spoken, burst forth with vehemence.

‘Not the grave, Janet,’ said Mabel, tenderly. ‘I always try to feel—and, indeed, I *know*—that little

Bessie is not really in the grave, but in heaven ; and that even the little body which I loved so dearly ——' (and here, for a time, it was hard to say whether Mabel or Janet cried the more bitterly), 'even the dear little body will be raised from the grave, and I shall see it again.'

'Are you always able to feel this way, Mabel?'

'Oh, no, not always ; and never as I ought to do. But Mrs. Amory has helped me, and I only wish she were here to help you, too.'

'Well, you can tell me what she said to you.'

'Ah, I have only got the thoughts, and there is so much in the way of putting them. But I thought it very beautiful when she told me that God brought His people closer to Himself by sorrow than by anything else in the world ; that it was His way of drawing them, as the Bible says, "with cords of a man, with bands of love ;" and that what she called the "fellowship of suffering" was the closest fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.'

'But trial is often sent as punishment,' said Janet. 'I am sure mine was.' And again the bitter tears burst forth.

'Yes ; but it *becomes* a blessing,' said Mabel, eagerly. 'Mrs. Amory said that was the wonderful part of it, that when we deserve only punishment God makes it the means of giving us so much happiness, because He gives *Himself*.'

'He must be *asked* to do so, though,' said Janet.

'Ah, He does not always wait for the asking. He "draws nigh," Mrs. Amory said, even to those who seek Him not. He loves and pities them, and says "Weep not." He "binds up the broken-hearted, and giveth medicine to heal their sicknesses."' "

'How nice for you to have had your clergyman's wife to talk to you when you were in trouble! No one talked to me,' said Janet, sorrowfully. 'They kept saying it was "all for the best," until I almost hated them, although they meant it kindly too.'

'Poor Janet! if only Mrs. Amory were here now to help you! But I know she would tell you that no words of any earthly friend can be like *God's* Word; and that our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."' Then, after a little pause, Mabel added, 'I will copy out for you some texts that Mrs. Amory wrote for me. They are so full of comfort; they make one feel it impossible to doubt God's love and goodness to us.'

'Do, please,' said Janet; 'I can look at them at any rate.'

'But then, Mrs. Amory told me——'

'Go on,' said Janet, as Mabel hesitated a little.

'She told me that when God our Father had done His part we had *ours* to do——'

'Go on,' said Janet, again, a little impatiently. 'What is our part? To pray, I suppose, and read the Bible?'

'She said, Janet, that it rested with us whether we would *take* the great blessing that God intended for us; or whether we would lose it by our own carelessness and worldliness. And, O dear Janet,' the young girl went on, with tearful earnestness, 'she said, and it seems an awful thought to me, that sorrow never leaves us where it found us; that we must be either the better or the worse for it; and that Satan is always trying to rob us of the good that we are meant to get from it. But then she said, too—and this is the great comfort—"Remember, Mabel, the Lord Jesus is on your side, unless you leave Him and join the enemy's ranks. The Lord is stronger than Satan. Keep close to Him, and you will gain the day. You will be more than conqueror through Him that loved you."'

'But still you have not told me how we are to *take* the blessing meant for us,' said Janet, after a little pause.

'You said it yourself, Janet; we must pray and read the Bible. "We must pray," Mrs. Amory said, "to say from the heart, 'Thy will be done!' and THEN WE MUST TRY TO DO IT."'

CHAPTER III.

'We need as much the cross we bear,
As air we breathe, as light we see ;
It draws us to Thy side in prayer ;
It binds us to our strength in Thee.'

MABEL's friends at Holmhurst Vicarage did not disappoint her hopes.

In a few days she received a warm, affectionate letter from Mrs. Amory, full of encouraging and sympathising words. Enclosed was a paper written by the Vicar himself, and intended for Janet Wood. She read it, and prayed over it, and received it as a message from God to her own soul. Nor was the poor sorrowing visitor at Limecourt forgotten by those servants of Him who 'had' compassion' on the childless woman of old. A little book, containing words of sweet comfort and counsel, was forwarded by post to Lady Fosbroke, with many prayers that a blessing might attend its mission. There is reason to believe those prayers were answered.

And now some years have passed away, but Mabel is still at Limecourt, the head housemaid there, trusted and loved by those about her. She often pays a visit to her home and friends, and loves to go and sit by the grave where little Bessie's

remains are waiting the summons which 'all that are in the grave' shall hear.

Mabel can, indeed, thank God for that her first great sorrow. She can thank Him for sending her a trial to bring her nearer to Himself. Still more can she thank Him, that when her faithless, erring heart, would again and again have led her from Him, He would not give her up.

For, when the first pressure of grief began to pass away, a great reaction of feeling took its place. There came a renewed *longing* after pleasure and excitement; an impression that she had thought more about religion than was really necessary, and more than 'many very good people' seemed to do! Mabel was in great danger then; and yet she had a feeling of security which was worse than anything. 'God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart' (2 Chron. xxxii. 31), is said of a servant of God in olden times; and often are God's children 'left' now, to prove their own utter worthlessness and weakness.

When poor Mabel was first awakened to a sense of her backsliding she was almost tempted to despair. 'Ah,' she thought, 'it is true what Mrs. Amory said! and *my* trouble, after all, has left me worse, not better, than before. I am more worldly, more selfish, more hard; and that, too, after all that I have tasted of God's tender love and kindness! Oh, I must, indeed, be bad!'

When an opportunity offered itself Mabel opened her heart to Mrs. Amory, her unfailing friend and counsellor. 'I thought I had got nearer to God,' she said, weeping bitterly : 'much nearer ; but now I seem further off than ever.'

'Poor child ! dear Mabel !' said Mrs. Amory, tenderly. 'Ah, my dear, you are only learning the lesson which our gracious God and Father would teach His own children—their entire dependence on Himself for every good thought, word, or work, from day to day, from hour to hour.'

'But I have been leaving Him,' said Mabel, sadly.

'And He has been drawing you back again. Ah, Mabel ! we do not soon exhaust the tender mercies, the long-suffering, of our Heavenly Father. "He knoweth our frame." What a *mine* of comfort is contained in those words ! Not indeed—God forbid !—that they should lead us to presume upon such love, but they may help us to rejoice in it and to take courage.'

'But,' said Mabel, 'you told me that sorrow never leaves us as we were before ; I am so afraid that my sorrow has left me worse than when it came to me.'

'That very fear, dear Mabel, makes me trust it is far otherwise. You are more alive to evil than you were before, more sensitive to what is wrong ; but indeed you cannot keep too jealous a watch

over your heart and conduct ; for a great trial, of any sort, is a *great responsibility*. We are too prone to forget that, and yet I believe there are few things for which we shall have to give a stricter account than the use we have made of affliction.'

'It is that thought that frightens me,' said Mabel.

Her friend smiled kindly as she answered :

'A good sign, dear child : but take the expression of your fear *to God* ; don't try to get over it by anything you can do alone. We must always remember, too, that sorrow is the instrument of good ; but not the good itself. Do you understand what I mean ?'

'Not exactly,' said Mabel.

'The great end of sorrow is to bring us to God, as the only Fountain and Source of happiness. But we must guard against mistaking our natural feeling under heavy trial for its spiritual and abiding effect upon our souls. The natural feeling will pass away ; and if we have been *resting* in that, there must be bitter disappointment in store for us. But if we have been using it as the means to an end—if our sorrow has indeed been sanctified by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter—if our sense of desolation has led us to take hold of God as our unfailing refuge—if our sense of need has led us to rejoice in Him as the all-sufficient One—blessed will be the fruit of that sorrow. With all our varying moods

and feelings, all our waywardness and backslidings, it will never wholly pass away, till we come to that land where sorrow can never enter, and where God Himself shall "wipe away all tears from their eyes."

PRUE'S BABIES.

By MRS. STANLEY LEATHES, Author of
'Soi-même,' 'Penelope,' &c.

CHAPTER I.

IF you had seen poor Prue Friar's home, you would have wondered how anything so clean and tidy as Prue herself could come out of it. It is true her clothes were old and mended, but they were clean and neatly put on, and her skin also was clean and fresh, and her hair smooth and well kept. Poor little Prue! there was something sad about her face, though her smile was bright when it did come, and her eyes kindled at a kind word.

She had lived all her life in a wretched London court. All the play she had ever had, had been in it—hopscotch along the few pavement stones; playing school on the door-step, from which she and her playmates were often rudely pushed by the

occupants of the houses ; round the gooseberry-bush (only there wasn't room for it) ; and hide-and-seek behind the doors and up the entries. She had no thoughts of fields, and flowers, and hay-fields, for she had never seen them ; and the pleasantest thing she knew was to sit at work in the early morning by the garret window, and feel the fresh air (such as it was) blow through her one geranium upon her face, and to listen to the thrushes and blackbirds in cages which sang outside a neighbour's window.

Then the garret itself was the only room she had ever known ; and it was a dreary place, lighted by one very small window, from which you saw nothing but chimneys and roofs, and half filled up by a great bed which served for herself, her mother, and her two little sisters to sleep on. There were two or three chairs, a table, and a chest of drawers, and many other boxes and odds and ends, so that the room was so full it was difficult to move about in it ; and it also smelled close and unwholesome. How Prue came to be so clean I often wondered, for she lived among people who did not care for cleanliness ; and her mother called her a fidget, and her neighbours 'the little Quakeress,' because of her quiet, tidy dress.

She had been very little at school, as her mother, who had been a widow for a great many years, had wanted her, first to take care of the younger ones,

and afterwards she was glad to get her 'a little place' to help to pay the rent. So, ever since she was ten years old, Prue had had 'little places;' and she had comforted many little neglected children, and hushed to sleep most of the little babies that had been born in the court for the last five years; and she knew all the wiles which delight them, and all the little plays at which, from generation to generation, babies laugh and clap their hands.

She was now sixteen, and she was quite an experienced nurse. For the last two or three years she had been constantly at a night-school, for which she had paid out of her own wages, and she could now read fairly, and was by no means ignorant in Bible knowledge. Her steadiness and good behaviour had attracted the attention of the clergyman who visited the school, and he had just obtained for her a place of a better stamp than those she had had before, and when my story began she was just going to it.

It had been very hard work for her to get proper clothes for the place. Her mother was shiftless and careless, and when she had a little money she spent it freely and foolishly; and then came a time of pinching and misery, when she was cross and grasping, and would scold Prue for her selfishness, as she called it, for not giving the clothes she had bought with such difficulty, that she might pawn

them for food. Very often they went ; but it was very hard, as Prue knew she could never get a good place while she was so poorly clad.

However, at last, through the help of the clergyman's wife, she managed to make up her little bundle, and she bid a tearful adieu to the dirty garret and the noisy court, and her mother, who only said, 'We shall have no one to set us to rights now, and I suppose you'll soon be getting too fine for Purday's Court ; but send me some money the first time you take any. Good-bye, I am quite done up with all this fluster.'

Poor little Prue cried and kissed, and kissed and cried again, but she did not say much ; she was not accustomed to express herself much. She had heard in her wretched home little but quarrelsome speech, and foolish talking, and bad words, and she said to herself, 'It seems to me that it's the talk that gets folk into trouble, and makes them quarrel and waste their time, and sin against God. It seems to me it's better not to talk if folk haven't got anything good to say.' And many a quarrel came to nothing because Prue gave in, and had nothing to say back when angry words were showered at her.

But the place to which Prue was now going was one where Prue would hear different kind of talk. She was going to be an under-housemaid in a large house in the West end. She rather dreaded it, and

her heart failed her as she went in and saw the large staircases and the grandeur. It looked cold and unhomelike to her. And the other servants stared at her, and whispered together, and seemed little disposed to be kind or to make her way smooth.

'What shall I do?' she said to one, after she had been standing in what seemed to her wretched idleness for a long time.

'I'm sure I don't know,' was the answer.

'May I see the housekeeper?'

'Housekeeper? You'd better not call her that. Mrs. Briggs is out, I believe.'

So Prue crept back timidly to the little room she was to share with another servant.

She was arranging her scanty wardrobe in a drawer that she found empty, when her companion came in, and, kicking roughly aside the clothes that were scattered on the floor, told her to move out of the way.

'And is that all you've got?' she said, contemptuously, pointing to the little bundle. 'A fine thing indeed for such as you to come into a house like this!' And she burst into a rude laugh, and left the room.

Prue had scarcely time to dry her eyes and put her despised treasures out of sight, when a loud, angry voice was heard asking, 'Where is she?' And in a minute up came the housekeeper, out of

breath from climbing to the top of the house, and angry in consequence.

'Prudence,' she said, 'you're the new under-housemaid. This won't do, I can tell you. They tell me you've been here two hours or more, and been pottering up in your own room. You don't come here to idle, but to work. There's all the back-stairs to be cleaned to-night; so you'd better begin at once.'

Prudence said something about 'waiting for orders,' but the housekeeper was too angry to listen, and drove her downstairs before her.

Prue was at work till very late that night, and then she went in to supper with a number of other servants, who laughed and had jokes among themselves, but took little notice of her. Little, quiet Prue said to herself, 'Talk don't seem to do no good here.'

At ten the servants went in to prayers, but she was left behind, as the housekeeper said she'd better go straight to bed, whispering to another servant, 'She ain't fit to go in.'

CHAPTER II.

A HARD life poor Prue had of it, ordered about by first one and then another, bearing the blame of every one's neglect, and slaving from morning till night without a word of approval, or even a kind look. She certainly had once overheard the house-keeper say to another servant, 'She's the best working girl we have had in the house for a long time, and clean and tidy enough ; but it won't do to go setting her up by telling her so.'

She did not think it was of herself they were speaking till she heard some one say, 'Hush ! there she is ; and these are new days at present. I dare say she's no better than the rest ; for my part, I don't like that over-quiet sort.'

It has a bad effect upon any one to be distrusted, suspected, and oppressed ; and poor little Prue became graver and sadder day by day, and went to her work with less courage and less heartiness than she had begun with. Still she kept up her good character, for she was always to be trusted ; if she was told to do a thing she did it, and did it thoroughly.

The evil effects of careless and wrong talking had struck her in her poor home, and now she felt that, though of a very different kind, the talking

was as silly and as harmful. So when she had any quiet time she looked out in her Bible all the texts she could find which referred to the government of the tongue, and these were some that she found :—

‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips.’—*Ps.* cxli. 3.

‘A soft answer turneth away wrath : but grievous words stir up anger.’—*Prov.* xv. 1.

‘The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds.’—*Prov.* xviii. 8.

‘If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. . . . The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.’—*Jam.* iii. 2, 5, 6. (See also the whole chapter to the end.)

Thus Prue went on in her own quiet way, trying to do everything as well as she could, waiting patiently till God should send her brighter days. She felt sure, somehow, that they would come, if she did not forget her duty, and if she loved and served God with all her heart.

One thing gave her pleasure in that hard life, and that was an occasional glimpse she got of a dear little baby in the nursery. Oh, how she loved

that baby ! She would stop scrubbing when she heard it cry, and long to run and soothe it ; and to see it in the passages, or on the staircase, made the day bright to her. The nurse had caught her one day peeping through a crack in the nursery-door to try to see it, and had called her in, and told her she might look at the baby as he lay asleep in the cradle. The happiness of that day was never to be forgotten.

It so happened that one evening she was going downstairs at about eight o'clock, dressed earlier than usual. As she passed across near the nursery-door the nurse came out dressed for walking, and beckoned to her to come to her.

'Prue,' she said in a whisper, 'me and Jane want to go out together to-night. Will you go and sit by baby's cradle while we are away? He never hardly wakes up, and all the other children are asleep, so it will be all right ; but if he should stir, just rock the cradle gently and he will go to sleep again.'

Prue's face beamed with joy as she heard this request. It did just occur to her to ask, 'Would mistress like it?' but then nurse, she thought, was such a grand person she must do right. It would be impertinent of her, the little under-housemaid, to dictate to Mrs. Connell, as they called her among the servants. How she envied Jane though, the under-nurse, who was always so near the dear little baby !

So Prue sat down by the cradle in complete happiness. She fixed her eyes on his little waxen face, and hushed her breathing lest she should disturb him.

'Mind you don't leave him, and don't go to sleep,' said the nurse as she went away; 'I think you're a good, steady girl, or I shouldn't trust you,' she added, as she closed the door.

As if she should leave him, or as if she could go to sleep with such a sweet sight before her eyes! But Mrs. Connell little knew how she loved the little charge committed to her.

The first hour passed quietly, and then baby moved and moaned, and started, and Prue rocked the cradle gently, and sang softly till he slept again. Then ten minutes passed, and the child moaned and started again; a spasm passed over the little face, and a hoarse cough followed—then another, and a struggling for breath.

Prue started, for among the babies she had nursed in Purday's Court one had died of croup, so that the symptoms were familiar to the little nurse. She flew to the bell, and rang it violently; then she prepared a bath from a kettle that was standing by the fire. By the time that was ready, a frightened little page-boy was standing at the door.

'Whatever's the matter?' he said. 'Why, is it only you, Prue? Whatever did you ring in that way for?'

'Send Mrs. Briggs here directly, and then run for the doctor : don't lose a moment, or the baby will die !' said Prue, vigorously.

'Mrs. Briggs is out, and everybody else but you and me, as far as I can see.'

'Then fetch the doctor, tell him not to lose a moment,' said Prue, who had by this time lifted the baby from its bed and begun to undress it. 'Tell him it's croup,' she added ; 'and tell him to bring some medicine.'

- The crowing cough and the struggling increased, and Prue cut off the clothes ruthlessly, and laid the child in the warm bath.

Immediately it was soothed, though the spasms continued ; but owing to her promptness and thoughtfulness the Doctor, who lived near, was with her before the effect of the warm water had passed off. He brought, too, the necessary medicine, and administered it without delay, and in a little time the child was better.

Not till then was the Doctor sufficiently disengaged to speak to Prue. He had asked for Mrs. Fontenoy, the child's mother, and then for the nurse ; and on hearing they were both out, and that no one knew where they were, he said no more, till, when the babe slept tranquilly in Prue's arms he asked,—

'And was the child left in your care ?'

‘Yes, sir. Mrs. Connell told me to sit by his cradle while she was out.’

‘And was it you who sent for me, and sent the message, and put the child in the bath?’

‘Yes, sir. I have been with a child before who had croup.’

‘And who are you?’

‘Only a little under-housemaid, sir.’

‘Well, whoever you are, you have in all probability saved the baby’s life, my girl; and I could never wish to see a more gentle, careful, and clever nurse than you have proved yourself to be to-night.’

Just then the servants returned, and while the Doctor was speaking to them with some severity Prue slipped away, for Mrs. Connell had taken the baby from her arms.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning Prue was going quietly to her work when she was called into Mrs. Briggs’ room, and questioned as to all that had happened the last night.

The housekeeper spoke gently to her, and ended

by saying, 'Well, mistress is so much pleased with all she hears of you, and the Doctor says you are so suited to children, that she means to offer you the under-nurse's place under the new nurse, for Mrs. Connell and Jane are going this evening.'

Poor little Prue was too much overcome with joy to say more than 'Oh, thank you; thank you, ma'am!'

'I said you would like it, child; and I also said you were a very good, respectable girl. You'll want a few nice dresses for the nursery, and mistress says I'm to get them for you, and she'll give them to you as a reward for your good conduct last night.'

So Prue took her place in the nursery, and was often intrusted with the dear baby boy, who soon loved her almost as much as she did him. And, indeed, all the children grew fond of her, for she had such a kind manner and such gentle ways with them.

The new nurse proved to be a good woman, and she taught Prue very much that was useful, and the nursery was a happy place both for children and servants in those days. Prue would never have gained the confidence of Mrs. Briggs if she had not worked on patiently doing her work thoroughly in spite of all discouragements; neither would she have learnt so much about babies in her 'little places,' if she had not only tried to do her duty by

them but also learnt to love them. I often think, when I see girls nursing babies with a discontented scowl upon their faces, what happy work nursing might be and ought to be, if the nurses learnt to love the babies, and the little children they have to care for. If they played with them, and fondled them, and watched them tenderly, as Prue did, they would find their happiness in them after a time.

But to do this they must be unselfish and patient; for the lessons that the care of children should teach are to be unselfish and patient; and if they are not unselfish and patient, they are unfit to have the beautiful charge of children committed to them. It is the old story, that, if you look out for it, there is happiness to be found in the work God gives you to do. If people will look upon their work as a curse, it *is* a hard thing to them; but if they will only believe that a good Father, Who loves them, gives them their work to do, it becomes a blessing. Do try this plan, dear girls: do take this thought into your hearts. Try to love your work, whatever it is; do it as well as ever you can, and be cheerful over it. And, if you have little babies to take care of, try to love them, and fondle and cherish them, and you will find them the sweetest companions and comforts possible.

I shall be so thankful if only one or two of the

girls who read this story look the more lovingly on the little babies they have to nurse, and therefore exercise more patience towards them, and learn to find their happiness in them.

A BIT OF AN ENVELOPE.

‘My dear, this heat is perfectly intolerable ; as to staying here any longer it is impossible !’

Thus my wife addressed me three days after our arrival at Cadenabbia, on the Lake of Como, where, after being tired to death with sight-seeing in Rome and Florence, I had hoped to spend at least a quiet fortnight, with the comfort of feeling that there was nothing to see which required exertion, and no one in the place to whom it was necessary to speak.

‘It is hot,’ I replied, ‘but not disagreeably so, and we can always get air by going on the lake towards evening.’

‘As for you, you are a salamander,’ said my wife. ‘But what is the good of coming to a place for health and change when you can’t stir till the evening? and then it is as damp as damp can be. Posie is getting quite white and thin, and can’t sleep for the heat, and I feel it almost as much.’

‘Well,’ I answered, ‘where can we go? what can we do? I don’t want to go into Switzerland just to come back again, for I suppose we must spend another winter abroad; and I don’t know of any place in Italy where it is not hot in the month of August. However, we will see about it.’

And so saying I took out my map and spread it on the table before me. My wife never can understand a map, which is to me better than all the guides and guide-books in the world, provided it be a good one.

‘My dear William,’ she exclaimed, ‘you will never find anything there; you had much better ask the landlord what place he could recommend to us.’

‘I shall consult my map first,’ I replied; ‘and if that doesn’t help me, I will follow your advice: but he will probably tell me that this is the most bracing place on this side the Alps, and recommend us to boat every evening, and wait patiently till the weather is cooler.’

And so I pored and pored over my map; now with my finger on Turin, wondering what the Vaudois valleys were like; now going up towards St. Moritz, and turning back again to Susa. Against every place I could find I had heard something; bad food, bad smells, cold, heat, too much sun, too little sun. What was to be done? I was just going to give up the search and follow my wife’s

advice, when my finger stopped over a spot marked on the map Monte Generoso.

‘What is this, I wonder?’ said I. ‘Monte Generoso! I never heard of it before; if nothing good, at all events nothing bad. Let us look at Murray.’

My wife was in a moment turning over its well-worn pages; but soon lost in inexplicable *routes* she handed it to me, and I found and read the short account there given of Monte Generoso; the principal facts being these: ‘It is called the Righi of the Italian lakes. A good mule-path leads to the top; and an excellent and well-furnished hotel, kept by Dr. P——, two hours’ walk below the summit, now affords accommodation to travellers.’

‘The very thing!’ exclaimed my wife. ‘Do let us go there at once. And,’ added she, lowering her voice, and looking cautiously towards the doors, of which there are always two or three in every foreign room, ‘I really think it much wiser to go to some place a little more off the beaten track; for, you know, Frank Hatherley is abroad, and he is just as likely as not to come here. I have fancied ever since Posie heard it that she watches the arrival of the steamers with great interest.’

‘Oh, nonsense!’ I replied. ‘Posie isn’t thinking about Frank now; besides, if so, we may as well go home at once.’

Just at this moment Posie entered the room, and I could not help noticing she was pale—not quite the Posie of a year ago. She came, and putting her arm round my neck and looking over my shoulder, asked what I was plotting over my map.


‘We are plotting,’ said I, ‘to bring back the roses to your cheeks, and have lighted on a place which will, I think, answer our purpose. Have you ever heard of Monte Generoso?’

‘Oh, do go there!’ she exclaimed. ‘I read such a delightful account of it and its spring flowers in the *Cornhill*: it must be perfectly lovely.’

This decided us at once: Posie wished it; and she, with rare exceptions, generally has her way with her parents. And here I may as well say of Frank Hatherley, that he was a neighbour of ours who wanted to become our son-in-law. The idea took us both more by surprise than it ought to have done, and I confess I think we were a little stupid not to find out sooner that such a thing was likely to occur. Frank had been constantly in our house, both in his school and college days; and when the time came for him to choose a profession, and he settled not far from his father’s house and took pupils, we still allowed him to come and be with us as if he were one of the family. That he should fall in love with Posie was not very surprising when we came to think of it; but that Posie should be

willing to marry him and leave us was what we could not quite understand ; not but what we liked Frank very much, and had a very high opinion of him : but then he was only just ' Frank,' and I confess I had visions of Posie's marrying some very superior man. My wife, too, was very vehement against her making a marriage from circumstances ; and then we both agreed, that, perhaps, we had kept her too closely at home, and that she had learned to look upon Frank as perfection, simply because there was no one for her to compare him with. It would be wise and even kind, we thought, to let her see a little more of other people, lest we should be induced to make a mistake in life, for which we should always blame ourselves. We never had any harsh words over the matter ; we love our Posie too well for that : but it so happened I was ill at that time, and advised to spend a winter abroad, and this gave us another reason for leaving home. So we let our house, packed up our things, told Frank to think of something else, and came abroad, doing all we could to amuse Posie, and let her see that Frank was not the only person in the world.

I don't pretend to read faces, as my wife does ; we each have our different gifts : to say the truth, I thought our winter had had a good effect on Posie : she seemed to like society, talked readily and happily, enjoyed all the sight-seeing, and appeared



well and contented. Certainly she refused two excellent offers of marriage without any hesitation ; but then I don't think I liked the men myself quite so well as I do Frank : but that she had the chance of doing so pleased me, for now I felt that he was no longer uncomparred with others. When I settled to stay abroad another winter she did seem rather down-hearted, I thought, but said nothing against it, like a good child as she is ; and so I was pleased that she took readily to the idea of going to Monte Generoso.

It was now the month of August, and there was no time to lose, so we settled to start the next day. I always leave the Lake of Como with regret ; it is to my mind the most beautiful of all lakes I have seen ; and for my own sake I would gladly have floated about on its glassy bosom in a little boat with a striped awning for the remainder of the summer, watching the many soft colours blending and changing both on lake and mountain. I cannot say I have any fancy for mountain-tops : they bring to my mind comfortless, thinly-built hotels, with next to no furniture in them, bad food, incessant noise, and clouds whirling about you like smoke ; places where you sit in your room, probably with a noisy smoking man on each side, wrapped up in your greatcoat with a rug over your knees, trying to fancy you are gaining good by being in a bracing air. However, I hoped things might be different

on Monte Generoso, and at all events it would do my wife and Posie good.

From Como we drove to Mendrisio. I do not know the number of miles, but it took us about two hours, and the drive was beautiful, owing partly to its being a glorious day; but amongst vines, with mountains before, and a lake—and such a lake!—behind, what road could be otherwise? It seemed as though we should never come in sight of Monte Generoso: every house on a height we felt sure was the hotel, every village at the foot of a hill Mendrisio. Not very long after crossing the Swiss frontier, however, we reached the village. Telegraphic signs between our driver and the official at the custom-house, consisting of a violent shrugging of the shoulders and a cracking of the whip on the part of the former, and of a cool nod on the part of the latter, let us pass from Italy into Switzerland without further trouble. A large new hospital was the first building which attracted our attention in Mendrisio; and soon after passing it we turned out of a narrow street into the yard of Dr. P——'s house, and were received by his brother, who made the necessary preparations for our ascent. My wife had so packed that we could, if necessary, take only carpet-bags with us; but to her surprise, and the outrage of all her feelings of humanity, the trunk—a somewhat large one—was strapped on to the back of a mule, which

walked away with it as if it were full of feathers. I believe, in her heart, she was glad ; for there were books in it, without which she said I should be lost on a wet day, not to mention various warm garments, of which I thought we might greatly stand in need.

Whilst the mules were coming, and our arrival was being telegraphed to the hotel, we made an excellent breakfast, quickly provided for us in the house. An Englishman never rides anything but a horse with perfect satisfaction ; and so, in spite of my wife's gentle hints that I am not so young as I was, I took my stout stick, and walked beside her mule. It was intensely hot, and the first part of the way easy and dusty. The splashing of a picturesque, rich-coloured old mill sounded pleasant, and we stopped to drink from its rush of cool, bubbling water. Soon afterwards we turned off to the left, and began to mount in earnest. An ascent in Switzerland is beautiful, but to my mind, not to be compared with this. One passes through such rich, luxuriant vegetation. The maize, with its great shiny leaves, overhung here and there by vines, which cross and arch overhead, shading the road ; splendid chestnut-trees, with soft, cool-looking green turf beneath them ; bits of rock and stone walls, bright with flowers and alive with lizards, and butterflies hovering here and there, enjoying their own lives whilst gladdening ours.

The whole way up to the hotel is beautiful. The ascent occupies about two hours, and the last part consists of a series of perhaps fifteen zig-zags of excellent roadway.

Hot and tired, I greeted the first sight of the hotel, ugly as it is, with joy; and soon we saw heads out of many windows, watching our approach. We learned afterwards that about 4.30 p.m. is the usual time for arrivals, and they are looked for in so quiet a place with some degree of interest. We were pleasantly received by Madame P—— in her husband's absence, he being an army surgeon, and at that time with his regiment. The hotel is clean and airy, built on a barrack-like plan, but with far thicker outer walls than is usual. We had scarcely more than time to glance at the broad plain below, the dinner-bell ringing, and our luggage having to be unpacked. After dinner—and it was an excellent one—there seemed a general move; and I soon learned almost everybody was in the habit of going out at that time to see the sunset. My wife was tired, but Posie was delighted to come with me; and away we went, the sun still tolerably high, but reddish clouds gathering. The hotel has a small garden on one side, but beyond that all is wild—heath, grass, and rock, sheltered by stunted bushes, under which one can always find refuge from wind or sun. A good path slightly ascending leads to what is naturally called ‘the

beautiful view ;' and most beautiful it is. The mountain slopes steeply down to the Lake of Lugano, to that long arm which stretches out to Capo Lago. A portion of the bridge which spans the lake in its narrow part is seen, and beyond that the town of Lugano. Villages nestle themselves into the many hollows of the near hills ; and beyond, mountains, ever varying in form and colour, are piled one above another, whilst sharply out of the sky, high above all, rises Monte Rosa, with the slender head of the Matterhorn peeping over its shoulder. The pure white, unearthly Mischabel, continues the range, and then snow, snow, almost as far as the eye can reach, with here and there peaks rising above the rest as do the Weisshorn and Finsteraarhorn. Posie and I wandered on below the seat, round which many people were standing, that we might quietly enjoy the intense beauty.

The sun was sinking ; there was no flare of lurid red, no deep golden orange, such as you may see on the Campagna ; it sank gently behind the snow, leaving it slowly, regretfully ; and as it went the sky changed from pale blue to the most exquisite tender green of an indescribable delicacy and softness ; whilst above were wild flecks of gold and grey clouds, dashed about, tinged towards the sun with a crimson golden colour. Lake Maggiore lay in the distance, touched here and there with a red-

dish hue ; and the form of the mountains beyond was hidden in a pearl-grey mist, their eyes only being sharply marked against the 'daffodil sky.' On turning away and facing the hotel, the view, totally different in character, was scarcely less grand. The vast plain which stretches from Turin to Milan lay before us : it was now lost in a blue haze ; but on the following morning, when we looked from our windows, and saw it lit up by the rising sun, it seemed flooded with a golden dust. A large telescope on the terrace showed us plainly the Cathedral of Milan, which, to the naked eye, was glittering like a star to the east ; whilst to the west, above Turin, rose the Superga. Beyond all, far away, we could trace the outline of the Apennines.


In colour it was ever varying, and we never could determine whether we loved best the sea-like expanse of the plain or the snowy peaks of the Oberland. My wife and Posie felt the change from the heat of Cadenabbia to be a great relief, and even I was obliged to confess that I thought it had been a wise move. After breakfast we went and sat under some beech-bushes, gazing on the view, beautiful whichever way you look.

I soon fell to watching Posie, who was sitting near me with her work. Would you care to know what Posie is like ? Well, though I am her father, and think a great deal of her, I can't resist telling

you. She is tall and slight, but not too slight ; her shoulders are broad, and her head well placed on them. Her hair is golden—yes, others call it golden—and it is not put over cushions, nor stuck up on a top-knot. I could not bear to have two great heads—and one stuffed with wool—laid on my shoulder when Posie bids me good-night ; and so it is put plainly back over her ears, curling as it goes, and twisted up with many coils behind. It is a fine head, broad-browed ; and her eyes are the sweetest eyes, nearly grey, but with a tinge as if they had once thought of becoming brown, soft, but steady and brave—eyes which look straight into yours, eyes which could never prevaricate. The rest of her face is well cut, soft and feminine, but firm ; and her laugh, oh ! how joyous it is ! Sometimes lately I had thought her laugh was heard less often ; and now, when I looked at her, as she sat all unconscious of my thoughts just below me on the sweet thyme and heather bank, her face had almost a sad look, and those wonderful eyes of hers seemed gazing on something very far off, farther even than the snowy peaks. ‘If I could think Posie were not well and happy—I will speak to my wife,’ I thought, but somehow the opportunity did not come that day ; and the next, when after luncheon I called Posie to come for a walk, her face was so radiant that all thoughts of

her being unhappy were at once banished from my mind.

We rambled about aimlessly, losing ourselves every now and then in treacherous little woods, scrambling up slopes green as an emerald and studded with flowers, and coming suddenly on unexpected views of mountain and plain; whilst pretty, thin, gentle-looking cows, each with her bell, gazed wonderingly at us, and timid goats scampered away, leaving only their long horns visible above the thick fern. It was a happy walk, and Posie enjoyed it too, and came back laden with flowers — gentian, aconite, cyclamen, and many others, the names of which I do not know; and soon she made our rooms look habitable, as she can any place, with her flowers, her work, and her drawings. After dinner my wife strolled out with me to see the sunset, the great St. Bernard dog, 'Barri,' following us in a heavy, stately way. Overfeeding makes him lazy, and I suspect his fits of howling, which are attributed to melancholy, have something to do with his want of exercise. He is a fine animal, and, they say, becomes quite happy as soon as the snow falls, in which he rolls and gambols. Leaving the flagstaff we followed the little path high above the lake, and sat down on a projecting knoll; the perfect stillness was broken only by the bells of the little church below,



and the sweet voices of the choristers distinctly heard as they sang in the valley.

‘It is certainly a lovely place,’ said my wife, ‘and the air delicious. I could hardly have believed the difference it would make in Posie in so short a time. She looks like another being this afternoon.’


‘You don’t think,’ said I, ‘that she has been unhappy, or that she really is sad because of Frank?’

‘O no! rest assured,’ replied my wife, ‘it is not that. I confess I have been sometimes a little anxious, because, though Posie is so truthful and open, she is reserved too; and she has not been looking well, or seeming as bright as usual, lately. But I am quite happy about her now; she looks as fresh as a bird; and so it was evidently the heat of Italy which did not suit her; and besides, the winter, if enjoyable, was tiring both in Rome and Florence.’

This explanation quite satisfied us, and time passed pleasantly and rapidly away. The weather continued lovely, and we were able to spend nearly all our days out-of-doors, taking long walks or sitting about amongst the beeches, reading of the terrible things which were happening in the world below. The postman’s arrival between ten and eleven was the principal event in the day. He was to be seen toiling up the zig-zags, staff in hand, for some time before he reached the hotel, when a crowd

assembled round the door of the office, eager for letters, and more especially for newspapers; for kingdoms were crumbling and crowns falling in a way that seemed to make all personal interests sink into nothing.

By degrees we became acquainted with most of our neighbours. A clever barrister of the name of Matthews enlivened our party; he could converse on all subjects, and was often singularly brilliant and witty. He amused me, while his delicate-looking, sad-faced wife interested us all. We soon made friends with a Mr. and Mrs. Raymond; he was apparently some years older than his wife, but it is rare to find two people so entirely united in tastes, pursuits, and feelings. Both sketched like artists; they botanized together, read together, seemed never apart: but there was that in her pretty young face which plainly showed their companionship could not be for long. The bright hectic colour which flushed into her cheeks on the slightest exertion, and the short hacking cough, told those who could understand the telling, that she was fast sinking out of life. I do not think he saw it, but he knew she was ill, and lavished every care upon her. Their unselfish devotion to each other was beautiful and pleasant to see. One other family completed the English party, and consisted of a happy plump mother, with a good, silent, little husband, and a beaming son and daughter,



all strikingly alike, all strong, able to walk all day, to eat heartily, and enjoy life to the full. One quiet, gentlemanlike Italian, who spoke English extremely well, and two or three others, who appeared not to have much occupation, formed the Italian party of those who were staying in the house. Most days there were comers and goers, who seemed never to take off their boots, judging from the racket over our heads late at night and early in the morning, for they mostly went to the summit to see the sunrise, returned to breakfast, and then disappeared. To sit out all the morning in company with the dark butterflies, and the little, brown, rustling lizards, whilst I read the paper aloud, was my wife's great enjoyment; and Posie then would often go and sketch or botanize, with the Raymonds. In the afternoon she and I generally walked together, and often, in diverging from the beaten tracks, we found snares for birds placed in hundreds on some parts of the hill, and many a poor, fluttering bird we delivered from slow torture, though it generally only escaped with the loss of a leg or a claw. We sprang the traps which were set, but day after day found them replaced. No one acknowledged having anything to do with it, but no one seemed to think it cruel. In this way are caught the hundreds of birds, which, under the name of 'grives,' appear at the dinner-table. Posie took great delight in the little farm

belonging to the hotel, and she generally contrived to bring me home that way in order to have a draught of fresh milk, and to amuse herself with the tame sheep, the dog, and the chickens, which seemed to live in close companionship with the old woman who had charge of them.

One day, after we had been at Generoso about a fortnight, on coming in rather late for dinner, I found my wife and Posie already in the dining-room, and hurrying through my soup, lest the General (so the military-looking head-waiter was usually called) should be kept waiting, had just arrived at the fish course, when, on looking up, I saw that some one had meanwhile entered the room, and taken his place at the further end of the table. Surely, could it be? No! Yes! it was Frank Hatherley! I glanced at Posie; she seemed wholly occupied in picking some little bones out of her fish. Presently Frank looked up and caught my eye; I saw the colour come into his face; he left his place and came towards us. I confess I felt very glad to see him with his pleasant, honest face, and I greeted him cordially. He was shy; I never saw him shy with us before. My wife had a comical expression on her face, half of horror, half of delight, the latter predominating. As to Posie, she had no expression at all, and after shaking hands with him became again absorbed in the fish-bones. Our dinner was very silent, and I was grateful to

the round, happy family for making a good deal of noise. When it was over I met Frank, and he came with me for a walk.

‘Of course I need not tell you,’ he began, as soon as we had left the house, ‘that I had not the slightest idea you were here, or I should not have come; and if you wish me to go, I will leave immediately.’

‘No, Frank; pray do not do that,’ I said; ‘you know that I am very glad to see you, and indeed —’ here I felt I was getting on delicate ground, and only repeated, ‘Pray don’t go unless it is your own wish to do so.’

He looked contentedly towards me, and he did not go; instead of that he came up into our room, and we all spent a very pleasant evening together. Posie said little, but the expression of perfect rest on her face did me good. After he was gone I said,—

‘Well, Posie, wasn’t it a surprise to see Frank at dinner? he was the last person I expected in this out-of-the-way place.’

She looked quietly at me, and, colouring as she spoke, said,—

‘I knew he was coming.’

‘You knew!’ I exclaimed, laying down my paper in astonishment, and looking at her over my spectacles. ‘You knew, Posie! How could you know he was coming?’

‘I knew two days after we came here,’ she replied, half inclined to be merry at my surprise and half shy at making the announcement.

My wife and I looked at each other, and both remembered at the same moment that it was on that day Posie had rallied so wonderfully from the Italian heat.

‘Both you and mamma might have known it, too,’ she continued, ‘and I expected every day you would find it out.’

‘How?’ we both exclaimed; ‘no one here knows anything about Frank, and no one has mentioned him in letters.’

‘Don’t you know,’ said Posie, ‘there is a window in the office where the letters are put for those who are expected? Well, the day but one after we came here, just before I started to walk with you, I saw a letter there, it was almost hidden behind a newspaper, but I could read “ley,” and a bit of the Holmford postmark; so I knew it must be for Frank, and have been expecting him ever since.’

I could not but laugh.

‘I might have seen “ley” on an envelope in the bureau window for six months,’ I said, ‘and never thought of Frank.’ Whereupon my wife declared I was a ‘dear old mole,’ and seemed both amused and pleased.

When Posie was gone, and we talked the matter

over, I found her not only reconciled to the idea of a marriage, but glad and thankful about it.

‘I only wanted to feel quite sure that it was a true and lasting affection, and no mere fancy on Posie’s part,’ she said; ‘and once convinced of that, I should be perfectly contented to give her to Frank, for I like him cordially, and could not help thinking to-day how superior he is to all the young men we have met this winter.’

I was only too ready to agree, and we settled that we would tell Frank our decision the next day.

‘I suppose, by the way, that Posie does remain in the same mind?’ said I.

‘There is no doubt about that,’ replied my wife. ‘I see it now, and feel as if I had been very blind all this time: but Posie is so good, she always thinks of you and me before herself.’

The next morning I told Frank all about it, and explained again to him why we had wished for a time to separate him and Posie. ‘My wife had been very strong upon the point,’ I said, ‘having a dread of marriages made only because people have been thrown together from circumstances;’ but now that we felt sure both he and Posie had a truer, better love for each other than that, there was no one we should so gladly welcome into our family as himself. His look of gratitude and happiness when I told him this was pleasant to see, and I felt

our child's future would be placed in safe hands. What my wife said to Posie whilst Frank and I were taking our early walk I don't exactly know, but when we met at breakfast we were all very happy and merry, quite eclipsing the round family, who gazed at us with some curiosity. After breakfast Frank and Posie went up to the view, I believe, and it was not till near luncheon-time that the latter came alone to find her mother and me sitting in our favourite beech nook. She looked bright and happy, perfect contentment in her face.

'O Posie,' said I; 'so in all this time you have found no one better than Frank?'

'Better than Frank?' she exclaimed, indignantly; 'don't you know that all the other people in the world are like stocks and stones to me?'

'You ungrateful child!' said I; 'come and kiss this poor old stock directly.' And I took Posie to my heart, and prayed that God would bless her; and then it was my wife's turn to kiss her and say all sorts of loving, tender things; and when this was over, and we were somewhat composed again, Frank discovered where we were, and we went through very nearly the same ceremonies again with him, and ended by being, all four, as happy as could be. Of course, the Raymonds very soon found out what had happened; and the first tinge of shadow crept over our joy as we saw Mrs. Ray-

mond bend over Posie and kiss her, and wish that her life might be as happy as her own had been. She spoke as if it were over in this world, as if it were a bright pathway lying behind. When she ceased speaking I saw, though her face had no sadness in it, that her eyes were filled with tears. It seemed to me as if she passed on the joy of her life to Posie. Mr. Matthews congratulated, but made so many cynical remarks on lovers and marriage, and treated it all as such a fool's paradise, that my wife and I, who have walked in that paradise now—we won't say how many years, without feeling ourselves fools—were quite provoked, and fell to pitying his gentle, sad-faced wife exceedingly. And then my wife told me she had learned somewhat of their history, in no way a remarkable one, such as belongs to many who are not thought to be in need of pity.

Mrs. Matthews, as a young, warm-hearted girl, had been captivated by the brilliancy of the rising young barrister, and given him her whole heart, finding, when too late, that his talents, wit, and sceptical mind, were all she had in return ; of heart he seemed to have none. A little child had come, and the mother's heart twined round it, and found support. In a year it died. The father mourned for a time and then became harder and more bitter than ever. The mother's life seemed withered, and so side by side they went on together through life,

far apart in thought and feeling as east from west.

‘Poor thing!’ said my wife, when she had finished telling me all this, ‘how far happier is Mrs. Raymond, whose life, if short, has been complete, and who always speaks and acts as if death would be no real separation from her husband.’

‘Ah! life often separates more than death,’ moralised I; and then we talked on of all that was before us, and how glad we both felt our Posie’s future looked so bright, and that in all probability her life would not be spent far from us. ‘What a wise Posie it was after all!’ said I; ‘she knew exactly what would suit us all best.’

* * * * *

And so she did; and so it has suited us.

As I was writing these words in she came, as she does every day from her own home, and looking over my shoulder to see what I was writing, exclaimed,—

‘What! writing about that happy time, and dear, beautiful Generoso? How I should like to go there again some day! It was all a sort of fairy-land to me.’

And then we began to build castles in the air, as we used to do—how we would return there one of these days, and spring the traps, and watch the

lizards—when in came my wife with her eyes somewhat moist and her voice rather tremulous,—

‘How curious,’ said she, ‘that I should hear of both our Generoso acquaintances on the same day!’ and she held out to me a letter: it was from Mr. Raymond. He told us his dear little wife had been taken from him. ‘For the short time of our separation,’ he added, ‘I work on with all which she had most at heart, and am occupying myself with many things which only her illness prevented her from doing herself.’

He wrote with much affection of Posie, as one of whom his wife had been specially fond, and hoped our acquaintance would not cease. Nor shall it cease if it rests with us.

‘And of the others?’ said I, after a while, putting down the letter.

My wife handed me a county paper, in which was a long speech by the renowned and brilliant barrister, Mr. Matthews, now returned as member for ——. Allusion was made to his talents and excellent qualities; even his wife had a glow from his glory cast over her name.

‘Of all our Generoso party I wonder who is the happiest?’ said I.

‘Oh, no one can be as happy as I am,’ exclaimed Posie; and, looking in her dear, radiant face, I was inclined to think so too, though my thoughts wandered to that one of us who had exchanged a happy

life for one still happier. And when we all four—for Frank had come in, as usual, to look for Posie—recalled and dwelt upon the beauty of Generoso, it seemed to me that she might be gazing from the ‘high mountain’ on the glorious city of God, shining in its jewelled brilliancy, and the snowy peaks of this world, with their sapphire shadows, be remembered by her as a faint image of that city whose light is ‘like unto a stone most precious.’

INTO THE LIGHT.

A TRUE STORY.

By A. H. NOYES.

CHAPTER I.

A FRIENDLESS GIRL.

IN some of the northern counties of England, where brick-making is largely carried on, it was (and perhaps still is) the custom for the labourers to work in gangs—the head of the gang being paid by piece-work, and having to settle accounts himself with those under him. The result of this was that every available member of a cottage household was pressed into the service ; boys and young girls, children and infants alike, frequently tasked beyond their strength, and almost invariably growing up brutalised and demoralised by the rough and degrading associations of the brickfield.

The woman, into whose last earthly habitation I am about to introduce the reader, had been one of these unfortunate children ; her earliest recollections were of being carried on her father's shoulders into the brickfield, when too young to walk there, and having to hand up to the brickmakers all day long the wet lumps of clay. Any pause in her task was severely punished, and she bore to her grave the marks of the cruel stripes inflicted by her father with his belt in that dreadful brickyard. There was no enforced schooling in those days ; by her own account she never seems to have come within the reach of any civilising influence, and could not recollect that anyone was ever kind to her, though as she did not look for it she did not miss it, she said : ' Why should she ? she fared as the others did.' No wonder then, poor soul, that she grew up into the hard, depraved, drunken, swearing woman she became ; and that when a wife and mother in her turn, her home should have been one of those wretched abodes of sin and misery which are but a mockery of the name of home. Her first husband migrated to London and died, leaving her the mother of three children, the youngest of whom, Lizzie, the only girl, is the heroine of this tale. Alas ! it is in vain that we seek for one better trait to present you with in this poor woman's character ; it was only when suffering from her last illness, a lingering consumption, that she came

under the notice of the clergy and visitors, and, as far as can be judged, she remained callous to every effort then made to teach and help her : fierce to the last towards her child, when she had no longer the strength to be cruel, pawning for gin every covering or warm article of clothing given her, and nearly always rudely repelling the visitor when she found she brought no gift. Poor soul ! hers was a terrible life and a terrible death : but with God rests alone the right to judge her, and one would never hold up the details of so painful a picture were it not necessary to show what fearful circumstances surround the lives of some of our poor children, and what unwearying efforts should be made to befriend them, and to place them in a condition of becoming better wives and better mothers to succeeding generations. Many are the sad details of poor Lizzie's childhood, as told by pitying neighbours, that rise before the mind's eye ; how, when a little, scared, three-year-old child, she would be found sitting on the staircase at early dawn, having crept out of the room and passed the whole night there, shivering in the cold, in order to escape the violence of her drunken stepfather and mother ; and how she would pass hour after hour on the doorstep of a public-house, waiting for her mother to lead her home, the reward for the patient watching being blows and bad words. When she was five or six years old her stepfather died ;

the eldest boy, then nearly grown up, got employment in a match-factory; and Lizzie, at that early age, was immediately set to making lucifer match-boxes at home, in order to add to her mother's resources. From that time, till she was sixteen, she was kept almost continually standing at a high table, from daylight until dark, engaged in her monotonous occupation. She was sent to no school, she learnt absolutely nothing else. At sixteen she could neither hold a needle, sweep a floor, boil a potato, nor read a letter of the alphabet. Her sole idea of happiness consisted in rushing down into the street and having a wild dance to the music of some street-organ. Sometimes, when having finished her gross of match-boxes (which she had to make for fourpence!) she took them home, no more were to be had for a day or so; she would then join any other idle boys and girls, and scamper in the streets from morning till night, heedless of the penalty which awaited her from the violence of her mother on her return.

Having given these preliminaries of hers and her mother's history as learnt, not all at once, but bit by bit, by subsequent acquaintance with her, we will take up her story from the time when she first became known to her visitor, who from that period can speak from her own personal knowledge.

It was the time of the first great Mission held in

London. Those who know the details of that work and of other similar ones, know what very earnest efforts were made to reach the numerous class of persons who never came near a place of worship, and consequently rarely heard the message of salvation and the call to repentance. None can ever forget the unwearying and self-denying efforts of the London clergy to gather in their stray sheep into school-rooms, mission-rooms, and churches, to talk to them and pray with them, and endeavour to arouse them to an interest in 'things unseen;' and we may confidently hope that in the great day of Harvest those faithful ministers of our Blessed Lord may present with joy many sheaves of precious wheat, the fruit of the seed sown in those Mission-times. Well, as I said, it was the time of the great Mission in the poor and populous parish in which Lizzie lived. It was an idle day with her, and she was out on 'a spree;' her curiosity aroused, she wandered into one of the meetings, where a number of parishioners were being addressed by their Rector. It was not much that poor Lizzie could understand, but before she left the room her mind was fully impressed with the thought that heaven was a happy place, that she would like to go there, that she was bad and would like to be better. Returning home she had to pass through the churchyard, and noticing some children's graves a terror seized her, lest she should die young and

never have time to 'get better.' The account of the next few days is best told in her own words :—

'I couldn't settle nohows to my boxes next day,' she said ; 'I felt I must take a run in the street and find some one to ease my mind. Mother, she swore at me as I were leaving the room ; but she were in her bed, and I knew as she couldn't get at me, so I didn't mind, and I gets into the street. Then I says to myself, I'll walk right along till I comes to a church, and then I'll go right in and find some one to speak my mind to. So I walks along, up one street and down another, till I sees a church with people a-pushing in through a little red door inside a big one. So I goes in and stays a long time, seeing a sight of fine things ; and by-and-by some one comes up and says, "Do you want anything?" "I wants to see a clergyman, very particular," says I. So he goes and fetches him, and directly I sets eyes on him I think he'll be sure to tell me. So when he says to me, "What be you a-wanting with me?" I says as I want to be better and go to heaven. Then he asked me a many questions, and at last he says, "I will take you to some kind ladies, and they will tell you all about it." So he takes me out of the church, and into a house where the ladies live, and they said as they would keep me there and learn me.' 'And how long did they keep you?' said Lizzie's interested auditor. 'Just two or three

days,' said Lizzie : 'I can't rightly tell the time. Then one day my big brother came, and he said I was to come right away home at onst.' 'How did your brother know where you were?' asked Lizzie's friend. 'S'pose he heerd tell on it,' said Lizzie, who had evidently never studied that problem. 'Did you go home at once?' 'Yes. Dick, he says he'd knock me down if ever I runned away again, and he says, "You jest stick to your matchboxes, that's all you has any call to think on."'

So poor Lizzie returned to her monotonous occupation with the great question still unanswered and still rankling in her mind, though she never dared speak of it to either her mother or brothers.

One day, having been out to the factory to take back her finished matchboxes, she met a girl with whom she had a slight acquaintance. They joined company and went on through the churchyard together. 'Can you read what's written on them tombstones?' said Lizzie. 'I should like to hear what it says on them, specially on all the little ones : perhaps they'll tell how them as is inside 'em has got to heaven.' 'I can read them,' answered her companion ; 'but there's mostly nothing but their names and ages, and I don't like creeping among them great, ugly gravestones. I always goes as quick as I can past them.' 'Does it say whether there's many of them gone to heaven, and whether they was good or bad?' persisted Lizzie. 'How

funny you talk ! Why do you care so much about the people that's dead ?' replied the other. ' Because they say heaven's such a happy place, and good folks goes there when they die. The ladies would ha' learnt me, if I'd stopped, how to get good and go there ; but now, what along of mother and Dick, I can't learn nothink about it ;' and poor Lizzie burst into tears, much to her friend's dismay, who had never thought much on the subject which seemed to trouble Lizzie so much. But, being a tender-hearted girl, she tried to console her friend, and after a moment's consideration a bright thought struck her. ' I tell you what, Lizzie, if I was you I'd go straight and ask our Rector. He is sure to tell you—he knows everything, and is very kind to us girls in school ; and he's your own clergyman, and so he won't think nothing of your troubling him.' The girls parted after a little further talk, Lizzie resolved once more to seek an interview with a clergyman.

CHAPTER II.

LIZZIE FINDS A FRIEND.

THE evening service was just over in St. Mary's Church, and the congregation departing, when Mr.

Leader, the Rector, stopped one of its members for a few minutes' conversation. 'I have got a case I wish very much to put into your hands, Miss Flower,' he began, 'if you will kindly undertake it. I had a visit this morning, in the vestry, from a strange little girl, who was so shy, and odd, and ignorant, I could make little of her. She says she is nearly sixteen, but she looks not more than ten or twelve. She began by telling me that she was a very bad girl, but on further questioning told me she couldn't remember she had ever done anything naughty, except buying a herring on Sunday! She then lapsed into total silence, and seemed hardly to understand the few words I had time to say to her. She does not appear to have been ever taught anything; I have got her name and address, and if you will go and see her, perhaps you could get her to come to you to be taught the first elements of religion. From her appearance I should say she has been totally neglected in every way.' In obedience to the Rector's wish Miss Flower undertook to find out the little waif, and next morning she soon made her way to 'Serpent Court,' No. 7, one of the dirtiest houses of that dirty place. She was directed to an upstairs back-room. A knock at the door was answered by the usual 'Come in!' Used as the visitor was to scenes of poverty and wretchedness, she had at that time hardly ever seen so utterly forlorn-

looking a home as the one in question. Ceiling and walls were black with dirt and alive with vermin, looking as if a lifetime must have elapsed since they had been touched by a whitewasher's brush. An old French bedstead occupied quite two-thirds of the room, leaving only a narrow passage between it and the fireplace, in which a small fire was burning in a broken grate ; a black pot and a bent poker were reposing in a heap of ashes beneath. In the small space between the foot of the bed and the window was a deal table, and every available bit of the floor on each side of it was covered with heaps of matchboxes, or the materials for them. On the bed, under a heap of dirty rags, lay a middle-aged woman, evidently in an advanced stage of consumption, with a fierce look in her restless eyes, and a countenance telling plainly of a life of intemperance and vice. At the table stood the girl Miss Flower had come to seek, her fingers working away, with the nimbleness of long-acquired habit, at her trade. She was indeed a singular-looking object, exceedingly small in stature, with tiny delicate hands, which were ceaselessly occupied in what appeared to the onlooker to be manufacturing the boxes by administering a few rapid taps on each end in turn, having first laid them out flat upon the pasted side of the labels which were lying on the table ready for use. The original colour of the front and sleeves of her dress

could hardly be guessed at, so thickly was it crusted with repeated layers of paste ; and her odd little face had a mixture of expressions in it, in which fright and slyness seemed at first predominant. Her features were not irregular, but a disfiguring scar on one cheek (caused, as was afterwards learned, by her mother having flung a pair of scissors at her in a fit of passion) and a cast in her eye gave her a strange look ; and she had an odd trick of never looking directly at the person she was addressing, but, when she had done speaking, would look up with a quick, sharp glance, to see what impression she had made—sometimes with a look of defiance and mischief, sometimes with one of fear and misgiving, as if she expected ill-usage. On the present occasion Miss Flower soon discovered that her dread of her mother was so great that she could not talk before her, for on beginning the conversation with her by the question, ‘Are you the little girl who was at church last night, and who would like to learn how to be good?’ her answer was a series of violent pantomimic grimaces, meant to express, ‘Pray don’t mention that now ; I will come outside and talk to you.’ Perceiving this, Miss Flower turned her attention to the mother, who was quite ready to tell of her sickness and poverty, thinking that the new visitor would be sure to pull out her purse. ‘You do seem sadly in need of many things,’ said Miss Flower, looking

round shudderingly at the filthy room. 'I should think the first thing would be to get some one to clean your room for you, as you are too ill to do it yourself; and then, if you could spare your little girl once or twice in the week, we might be able to teach her how to take better care of you. Supposing, one of these days, when you feel equal to it, I could get you moved into another room whilst this one is being whitewashed and cleaned, wouldn't you be much more comfortable?' This, however, by no means suited Mrs. Clay's idea of help, and she sturdily declined all interference with her dirty walls and floor. She proved more yielding, however, about the instruction of her daughter, especially when she learnt that the kind Rector would give the child a new suit of clothes to wear when she went to her lesson, and that an arrangement should be made with a neighbour to look after her during Lizzie's periodical absences. Thus was inaugurated a new era in the friendless girl's life; but let no one think it was henceforth all plain sailing. No! each step was won with great difficulty, and such slow progress that her teacher's patience was often nearly changed to despair.

But there was one great point about Lizzie; she was conscientious as far as her conscience went: honesty was the one virtue she thoroughly understood and appreciated; and when, after long and painful efforts, she had almost learnt the ten

commandments, she quite triumphed over the eighth, and after repeating it would almost always add as a commentary, 'I never did steal—never ! I wouldn't, not for nothink !' She was a very perplexing child. Her unnatural life had dwarfed and stunted her mind as much as her body ; she was full of odd ways and quaint sayings ; sometimes her lessons were altogether lost because something had roused her quick sense of fun, and she would laugh and chuckle to herself the whole time, though she would never explain the cause of her mirth. It took her a whole winter to master the alphabet, though she remembered pretty well what she learnt orally. For 'long words' she had a great admiration, using them whenever she could get them in. Her passions were strong, and her power of attaching herself to any one who was kind to her unusually deep and lasting, but nursed secretly and silently : indeed, there was a secretiveness and slyness in all her ways, the result probably of the harshness with which she had been treated at home, which gave her teacher much trouble and anxiety. After the lessons had gone on for many weeks her punctuality began to fail ; time after time Miss Flower visited the Mission-house at the appointed hour, and no Lizzie appeared, and each time she had some ready excuse to offer when inquiry was made : 'Mother couldn't spare me,' being her usual burden, but as it was generally followed by, 'I shall

be certain sure to come next time,' the excuse was always received. At length, a whole week having elapsed without her putting in an appearance at all, Miss Flower went one evening, after having waited uselessly for her for twenty minutes, to the court where she lived, to see for herself what detained her. The sick mother, a ruffianly-looking brother of two or three-and-twenty, and Lizzie, were at home.

'Good evening,' said Miss Flower. 'Lizzie, I am come to see what keeps you at home again this evening. Is anything the matter?' No answer. 'What is it? Can't you spare her, Mrs. Clay?' Still silence. Then the young man, with his hat on his head and his hands in his pockets, made one step forwards, and assuming an insolent swagger, spoke: 'The upshot of it is, Missis, Lizzie ain't a-coming no more; we don't approve your method of teaching.' 'No, we don't approve your method of teaching,' was echoed from the bed. 'Excuse me,' replied the astonished visitor, 'my visit was to your sister. Lizzie, do *you* mean you don't wish to have any more lessons?' For a moment Lizzie was dumb, standing with downcast eyes and demure face near the table; then from her lips came a slow, distinct utterance—'I don't approve of your method of teaching,' accompanied, or rather followed, by a quick glance, half of mirth, half of shyness, out of the momentarily raised eyelids. 'What does it all mean?' thought Miss Flower, struck dumb at first

by the oddity of the situation. Dick Clay began again : ' Do you think I can't buy a spelling-book for my sister if she wants one ? She says herself she could learn much better alone : don't you, Lizzie ? ' ' I could learn much better alone,' echoed the girl. ' I think you will be very sorry, Lizzie, some day,' said Miss Flower, taking absolutely no notice of her rude brother ; ' but as I don't feel sure you quite mean all you say to-night, I shall say nothing more to you now, but I shall tell the Rector, who, I am afraid, will be much disappointed in you.' And with a very sore heart Miss Flower left the house.

The Rector's advice was to leave the whole family alone for the present. ' Do not try to induce the girl to come again, as if it was a favour to you,' he said ; ' have patience, and bide your time, I do not think you have seen the last of her.'

About a fortnight after, Miss Flower was accosted one day in the street by Lizzie, whom she had not seen in the interval. ' Won't you speak to me, 'm ? ' she said. ' Certainly, if you have anything to say to me,' replied Miss Flower. ' I wanted to say as 'twas Dick who heard you coming up the stairs that night, and he says, " Look you here, Liz, I'll knock you down if you don't say as you don't approve of the method : so look sharp." ' ' I guessed something of that,'

said Miss Flower; 'but why doesn't Dick like you to learn? for as neither he, nor you, nor your mother, can read, none of you are good judges of the right way to teach.'

Lizzie shut her lips tight, as if she knew something she didn't mean to say, and nodded her head once or twice. 'Well,' at length said Miss Flower, 'I can't teach a girl who always says before her mother and brother that she'd rather not be taught, and then pretends she does when she meets me alone.' Lizzie looked up and down the street. 'It's along of them commandments and Bible stories,' she said, in a half-whisper. 'I tells 'em at home what you said about swearing, and drinking, and such-like; and mother and Dick they says, "None of your preaching! them as says that to poor folks is just as bad theirselves, and you shan't go nigh 'em any more." But look now,' pursued Lizzie, 'I can slip away some nights, as they won't know, and tell 'em nothink about it.' 'That will never do, Lizzie; that *would* be helping you to deceive. No; we must leave lessons alone for the present. If you had had the courage to speak the truth that evening it would have been better, but now we must wait till we can think of some other way of helping you; and since you refused to come, I have something else to do with the time I used to give to you.'


CHAPTER III.

LIZZIE'S FIRST PLACE.

WITHIN a short time after the events related in my last chapter the rupture of a blood-vessel on the lungs brought Mrs. Clay's illness to a sudden end ; and the Rector, finding that Lizzie had now no longer a home, and that it would be utter ruin to her to leave her under the care of her brother, who was in every way a most worthless fellow, placed her, with her own consent, under the care of a respectable woman, and had her instructed in cleaning grates, washing, sewing, and other useful employments. His great kindness to her won the poor child's heart completely, and she never saw Miss Flower (who now resumed her lessons) without expressing her wonder that anyone should spend so much on her ; and the wish not to displease the Rector became the great motive which influenced Lizzie's life, and made her not only try to learn what she was taught, but helped her to resist the efforts of her brother to get her into his power again.

When she had had about a month's good feeding and instruction a little place was sought for her ; and two elderly ladies, living in small apartments, consented to take her as their little handmaid.

Through the Rector's kindness she was provided with a neat outfit, and she went off promising to do her best. The good old ladies, who had been told her story, were very kind to her, and interested themselves in continuing her education by reading to her, teaching her needlework, &c. But, alas! the prim round of daily duties and the constant demand for good manners were too much for the poor wild elf; and every now and then the intense desire for a frolic would break out irrepressibly, and the dear old ladies found their serenity sadly disturbed by her doings. Imagine their amazement when one day, on hearing a barrel-organ in the street, Lizzie, suddenly setting down a tray on the first piece of furniture which came handy, ran to the window and began executing a wild dance, as she had formerly enjoyed doing in the streets! Occasionally she would hide the poor old ladies' spectacles, or bags, &c., just for the fun of discomforting them, or chuckle over something badly done in a way which showed she had done it on purpose. When not in a perverse mood she was quick and handy, and never forgot where to place anything when once shown. One of the old ladies being very infirm, she was required to be nearly always present, and to run all the errands, which she usually did satisfactorily. She was very fond, as was natural, of talking of the great kindness of 'her Rector,' as she always called Mr. Leader. On



one occasion, having done something wrong, her mistress observed to her, 'If you would talk a little less of your Rector, and think of what he taught you a little more, you would do better.' The next morning, on entering the sitting-room, there stood Lizzie, her broom lying on the carpet beside her, her arms folded on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ceiling. 'What are you about, child?' called out her mistress. 'I am thinking of my Rector,' said Lizzie, resuming her brush, her eyes twinkling with fun. One day Miss Flower received a note:—'Your little *protégée* has run away from us. If you find her we don't think we can take her back again; but will you come and see us?' Search was made, and Lizzie was discovered by Miss Flower in the street in which she had formerly lived. 'What have you been doing, Lizzie? why have you run away from your place?' 'I wanted to be bad,' said she, shortly, with her head down. 'Do you want to be bad still?' 'No, not now.' 'Where did you mean to go to?' 'To Dick.' 'Well, we can't let you go there; so you had better come with me to the Rector. Think how sorry it will make him to find, after all he has done to help you to be good, that you want to be bad!' 'I haven't taken nothink,' said Lizzie, entrencing herself in her honesty; 'and I've left them all my things.' 'Well, come with me and hear what the Rector thinks of a little servant who runs away from

her mistress, leaving her with no one to wait on her, and who wants to run wild about the streets and grow up a bad woman. I expect you will have to go to the Union ; for I don't believe your mistress will take you back ; and you certainly shall not sleep one night under your brother's roof.' Poor Lizzie came out from her interview with the Rector very subdued and penitent ; but he wouldn't forsake her, and again placed her with the woman who had boarded her after her mother's death, giving orders, however, that she should be kept more strictly to work, and made to feel that she was in disgrace.

CHAPTER IV.

LIZZIE'S FRIENDS REWARDED.

It was with great difficulty that another place was found for Lizzie, but the weeks which elapsed before a fitting home could be found for her were not without much good effect upon her. Her heart was softened by the kindness which forgave her and tried her again, and especially did she feel ashamed by the expense the Rector was incurring through her naughtiness.

. At last it was decided that there would be fewer temptations for her in the country, and she was sent to be the little maid in a village school-house, where she would receive training and clothes instead of wages. She left with many promises of well-doing, and was much cheered on being told that her new mistress had promised to write and say how she got on; and that if she continued to be a good girl she should some day come up to town for a holiday, and be taken to see the Zoological Gardens or some other sight. Just before starting she took an old purse from her pocket, and unrolling a mysterious little slip of crumpled paper, handed it to Miss Flower, saying, 'Please spell what's on that to me.' 'Why, it's the Rector's name torn off some old handbill!' 'That's it! all right, then.' She nodded with a most satisfied smile, and again most carefully folding up the slip of paper, replaced it like a great treasure in its old place.

It was not long before messages from her, with very fair reports of her behaviour, were received; and once or twice during the summer she was visited by her two friends, the Rector having friends of his own in that neighbourhood. She gradually began to grow more settled and orderly in her ways, and though some of her bad habits were very hard to conquer, yet she succeeded in keeping her place,

and having no longer cause for fear grew more truthful.

At the end of a year she came up to London to spend a day, and was indulged in her great wish of spending a whole day at the Zoo, and riding on an elephant.

Few would have recognised in the clean, trim maiden, dressed with Quaker-like simplicity, the little wild matchbox-girl of a dirty London court. Tiny she still was, both in form and stature, and she had added to her store of long words considerably, and still delighted in the use of them, and still retained the old odd way of speaking with her eyes cast down, and raising them with a sudden glance to note the effect of her words. 'Well, you never want to be bad now, Lizzie?' remarked Miss Flower in a pause of the conversation, which hardly ever ceased that day. 'Oh, I have! One day I wanted it so much, that if I had had any money I should have gone straight off by rail to London: but there now, I hadn't none, so I couldn't; and afterwards I said to myself, "There now, Liz, see how much wiser people is than you! it is a good thing your wages is spent for you: where would you have been now if you had had them in your own pocket? It isn't many girls as has friends like you, so don't you be going against them." Yes, I've come to the conclusion service is the best for young


girls ; and though my missis she says to me, " You wouldn't do for to wait on the quality, Lizzie, with their silver forks and spoons and their decorations, yet you do very nicely for me when you are a good girl." And next year I'm to have some money to spend myself.' She suddenly paused, and pulling from her pocket the same old brown purse which she had had in London, produced the old piece of crumpled paper, and triumphantly spelt the Rector's name on it, also the signature of the first letter Miss Flower had written to her. ' There ! ' she said, with one of her upward glances ; ' I always has them, and no one knows but you ; ' and she chuckled over her innocent secret. Perhaps that crumpled bit of paper had been a help to her in many a struggle to do right, by recalling the memory of those who had befriended her when a friendless waif of the great city. ' He came down, not long ago, our ways,' she continued. ' I had just run out on an errand, and saw him in the street ; but he never saw me. There was company with him ; but I just went behind him and walked on his shadow.' And her face beamed with contentment as she narrated the incident. ' I am sure you have helped to make him happy by trying to be a good girl. And now you must come and have tea, and I'll see you back to your train,' said Miss Flower.

The next occasion on which Lizzie and her

friends met was a year after the visit to the Zoological Gardens, when Miss Flower went down to be present at her confirmation. Her preparation had made a great impression upon her, and it was evident from her talk afterwards that she was very much in earnest in dedicating herself to God's service. Her mind was now more enlightened, but it only deepened her gratitude towards the Rector, her earliest and best friend. 'Now you can feel, Lizzie, what the Bible means when it says of Jesus, "He came to seek and to save those that were lost,"' remarked Miss Flower. 'Your Rector saved you by following in His footsteps, and, by trusting and obeying, you did your part in following, too; and if you continue in that narrow path, and look up to Jesus to be guided as you have looked up to your earthly friends, whom you will very likely not see often again, you will be on that road to heaven which you wanted so much to find when you were a little, wild, miserable child; and you know how He has "opened the gate of heaven to all believers."'

'I understand,' said Lizzie, with tears in her eyes; and I hope I shall never forget.'

The last time Lizzie was heard of she was still in the same place, happy and contented, and with no thought of leaving it.



AMY GRAY.

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

By MRS. WIGLEY.

CHAPTER I.

It was just such a little cottage as we come upon so often in our country rambles—low, thatched, and white with recent washing, with diamond-paned casement-windows, twined about with climbing red roses, climbing white roses, and the sweet honeysuckle, all well trained and in perfect order, though here and there a saucy young shoot that did not know any better *would* stretch out across the glass; but these shoots made such delicate trellises that they were quite forgiven for bursting their bounds.

There was a stretch of garden in front and another behind the dwelling, and there was a path all round 'the patch.' They called the plots

of ground into which the gardens were divided 'patches' in these West-of-England parts, and as each plot was devoted to the cultivation of some different vegetable, they looked very like patches too. The whole garden was surrounded by a good hedge—that was the boundary of the premises. On the right hand it kept off the road, on the left hand it kept off the little folks who trudged to school down the lane, and at the top and bottom it kept off the ducks from the pond and the sheep from the common. Wander where you would round these garden-paths you found nothing out of order. Every part had a finished-up look ; there was no litter anywhere, nothing to offend the eye or taste of the most fastidious.

And the inside of the cottage was in keeping with the outside. You could guess it was so before you went in, for the little bits of blinds were so white and even, and the glass was so bright and shining. One of your kind friends has said that the window is 'the eye of the room,' and so it is. Whenever you see that eye looking dull and heavy, then expect to find the house to which it belongs *looking ill* and *feeling ill* altogether.

Now, while we are about it, we may as well be bold enough to examine the house also. Not unlike many others you know, perhaps—we wish all were as full of comfort. Only four rooms. Two bedrooms upstairs, with dear little windows peeping

out of the thatch, and containing just the usual bedroom furniture—a bedstead, a washstand, a chest of drawers, two or three chairs, and two boxes, placed one on the top of the other by the window, to form a dressing-table and a wardrobe in one, and holding a dainty little white pincushion and a looking-glass. The furniture was all of dark oak wood, and looked massive and good. You might perhaps think it was varnished, it shone so ; but no, the polish only came from rubbing, good hearty rubbing, frequently applied. When we say frequently, we don't mean on Saturdays, or when the sweeps come, or even when the room is scoured, though we have no doubt it did get rubbed at these times, but we mean the rubbing it got every day when the duster passed over it—not a touch-and-go smear, but a good, brisk, hearty *rub*. That's the best oak polish we ever heard of, and we have tried a good many in our time.

But the chief attraction in the keeping of these little rooms was the boards. Oh, those white boards ! you were compelled to see them. True, there was a strip of carpet here and there and a tiny rug before the fire-place, but you felt these were hiding something so fair that you were half inclined to pull them away, just as you would draw back a curtain from a window to get at the view outside.

Going downstairs the same white boards accom-

panied our steps. We confess we have a weakness for this sort of thing, and we don't mind confessing it. In the houses abroad they stain the wood dark and wax it ; it is very slippery, but clever people say it is much cleaner and is far less trouble. This may be so, but there's nothing like white boards to our English eyes, especially in a cottage home. Of course boards that are not white are just horrid, but that's bad management altogether.

Going downstairs, we said : not many steps—only ten. Notice that the balustrade is of dark oak also, and shines as much as the furniture. It looks good and massive—this certainly is not seen in every cottage. At the bottom of these ten steps we come to a passage leading straight to the front door. One door opens out of this passage on either side ; that on the left hand to the larder, that on the right hand to the kitchen. The back-kitchen, or the wash-house, is built on behind. The whole of the lower floor is covered with bright red tiles—kitchen, passage, and larder ; and if the boards say to our eyes 'Look at our whiteness,' surely the tiles say 'Behold our redness.' The larder is fitted with shelves and a good-sized cupboard, while a bacon-rack is attached to the ceiling. Wherever you look there is the stamp of neatness and order. Nothing wears a show look : everything is well used, but everything is well kept ; and what a difference this makes to the look of things !

We have purposely left the kitchen to the last, it is 'the blossom of the house.' Standing at the door, with the fireplace opposite to you, the window on your right hand and the dresser on your left, you get a full view. On the mantelpiece are various tin and copper articles for domestic use, all as bright as brightness. On the walls are a few pretty engravings, framed and glazed. The dresser is filled with shining blue ware, and the window-sill with bright red flower-pots holding healthy plants. About the room are more oak chairs. One table stands under the window holding some books and what looks like a work-box, and another is in the middle of the room. There is a square of cocoanut matting in the centre of the floor and a knitted rug in front of the fireplace, a low rocking-chair on one side of the bright fender, and a good, roomy, cushioned arm-chair on the other. Everything is as prettily and daintily arranged and as sweetly home-like as possible.

Just stop here, dear young friends. Shut your eyes, and make sure you have got a good picture of this little home—its bedrooms, its stairs, its larder, and its 'little blossom' of a kitchen. Sometimes, when we think of something that is very good, our mouths water. Ah! we have often thought of this dear little home till our eyes have watered. Perhaps you will have as tender a recollection of it by-and-by.

CHAPTER II.

So much for the house ; now let us make you acquainted with the inmates. Only two of them, a brother and a sister, and they are both in the pretty kitchen at the time our story begins. The one, a young girl about eighteen or twenty ; the other, a bonny little fellow of five years—Amy and Eddie Gray, if you please. Amy is sitting in the low rocking-chair, sewing ; Eddie is on the matting playing with some wooden bricks.

We have seen such gardens and cottages, such shining furniture, such red tiles, and even such white boards, but we don't think we ever yet met with any young girl who was quite like this Amy Gray. She was very fair to look at. She had a smooth, clear skin, large grey eyes, and dark hair, glossy and wavy. And her features—mouth, eyes, nose, chin, and cheeks—seemed just the right shape to make a face full of sunshine and content. When she had been quite a little child the old village folks had shaken their heads over her, and had said, 'A bad heritage, child, thee hast—pretty and poor, pretty and poor.' But these were only the ailing old folks, who did not go out enough into the sunshine, and so were apt to make a miserable side for almost everything. Amy was *pretty*, certainly ; but certainly not then, at least, very *poor*.

And Eddie was a beautiful boy, with his round, plump limbs, his sunny curls, his rosy cheeks and mouth, and his dimples. Yes, he was a child that no one passed—no girl or woman, at least—without looking at him again. And these two were the only dwellers in the pretty cottage home.

Of course you will want to know how this came to be so, and we are quite ready to tell you.

Harry Gray had been a carpenter and wheelwright : thrifty, honest, perfectly sober, and industrious. He worked, he saved, and he thoroughly enjoyed life. He never drank anything but water. 'Why should I waste money on what I do not need?' he said. 'I am perfectly well and strong, my hand is steady and my brain is clear; why should I pay to have the one become shaky and the other clouded?'

'Take a little to keep your spirits up,' his companions would answer.

'My spirits are never down,' he replied. And those who argued with the young man knew well that no one had a wittier answer, or a merrier laugh, or a more musical song, than Harry Gray; so they let him alone to save and become more clear-headed and independent, while they spent and spent, not only money, but health and strength, and good character and position.

Lucy Gray, his wife, was indeed a help-meet for him. She had been a servant—a good servant—

who lived long in her situations and tried to make the interests of her master and mistress her own interests, and who was loved and valued in consequence. When she married Harry Gray she had 'a lovely stock' of good clothes, plenty of useful presents, and nearly eighty pounds in the savings' bank—the savings of nearly twelve years.

Soon after their marriage Harry began to carry out a pet plan of theirs—to build their own house. He enclosed a piece of common land, he planted a good hedge round it, and cultivated it with care and pride ; made a good garden of it, and then began to build on that part of it which he had reserved for his dwelling. While the masons were busy with stone, bricks, and mortar, he had been busy with the timber : he himself had felled the trees and looked to their seasoning ; he himself had made the stout, strong furniture ; he himself had put a bit of carving on this thing and a bit of an ornament on that ; and Lucy, his wife, seconded all his efforts, and polished and stitched away till everything was ready.

For nearly five years they busied themselves at all odd times in the preparation of their little nest, and when they moved into it Amy was a little toddler, not much over three years old.

'I want to make it so that it will be as good as ever when we are old folks, Lucy,' her husband had said. And the cottage stands now, and bids fair to

be in as good condition years hence as it is at this present time.

How Lucy Gray delighted in that little home ! how she touched it up and ornamented it ! how she trained her little Amy to take a pride in it and in all belonging to it ! They would not allow speck or soil to remain about it then, any more than speck or soil is allowed about it now. Yes, Amy was rich in those days : rich in her parents and in their loving, wise care of her ; rich in her home and rich in her own sweet, docile, happy disposition. But trouble came to Amy even in those days. Three little sisters were lent to her for just a little while, and then they went home again to God. She loved these babies so ; especially one who lived long enough to lisp her name—little Edith : but she, too, passed away, and when Amy was fourteen or fifteen she was the only child still.

And it was at this age that more trouble came to Amy, trouble which made her *poor Amy* in deed and in truth. Her father's business had very greatly increased. He was one of those who respected himself, and so others respected him. He kept a good many men now and one or two apprentices, and he still worked hard among them, displaying a clever head and a skilful hand in all he undertook to do.

There is a great curse that stalks abroad among our working men, and working women too in some

measure—the *curse of strong drink*: it saps their energies, clouds their bright intellects, cripples their means, and strips them of health, strength, and comfort. Harry Gray set his face, as much as in him lay, against this evil habit among his own men. He convinced them of its wastefulness, of its evil effects both to their bodies and their minds; but he could not convince them that ‘they did not like it;’ and so, though the knowledge grieved him, he could not but know that some among those he employed often passed from the workshop to the public-house, and reeled from thence in a state of intoxication.

One of his best workmen was Joe Matson, really clever and very intelligent when free from ‘the drink,’ but especially quarrelsome and troublesome when under its influence. Sometimes this man would work steadily on for weeks, then his place would be empty in the shop, and for days he would be in a condition at once disgraceful and degrading.

On one of these occasions Harry Gray was compelled to seek another workman in place of Joe, and to intimate to him that unless he could be more depended upon his master would not care to employ him again. This news came to Joe when he was half drunk and in an especially quarrelsome mood. He at once made his way to the shop, full of anger, not against his master, but against the workman who had taken his own place.

Harry Gray was absent on his arrival, but reached

the shop when the man, in his drunken fury, was ripe for any evil. His presence restrained Joe somewhat; and he tried a little maudlin compliment and coaxing on the master, whom he really liked. Harry persuaded him to go home, and come to him in the morning and talk about it. He was turning to leave peaceably when the man who had taken his place called after him, 'Mind you don't turn into the wrong gate, old fellow, and lie down with neighbour Green's pig.'

This taunt roused all the old fury. Joe caught up a heavy piece of timber and hurled it with mad strength at the speaker. It missed its mark—the taunter was unhurt; but Harry Gray was felled by it to the earth with a crushing blow on the side of his head. The men hurried to him; and poor Joe sat on a heap of shavings and cried drunken tears, only half conscious of what he had done.

Yes, they hurried to him; they raised him; they ran for water, for brandy, for a doctor: but it was all in vain. Harry Gray never moved, never spoke again in this world; he was struck dead by the hand of the drunkard.

There, not a hundred yards away, was the pretty home, all flowers, and brightness, and sunshine. There the mother ironed wee baby-things in expectation of another little one soon coming, she hoped, to wear them; and there Amy sat sewing at other wee things—making them dainty and pretty

with bits of edging and delicate embroidery from mother's stores.

They took him home to the house he had builded and to the dear one he had cherished. In their own bewildering horror they had forgotten the wife and the child ; so they just brought him in without a word of preparation or warning to soften the shock ; and Lucy Gray sank down on the litter they had made for him, beside his poor maimed body, as one without life or motion.

'Yes, he was quite dead,' the doctor said ; 'the fearful blow had quite smashed in one side of the skull, and the bone was embedded in the brain. He had died immediately—almost before he fell down, he thought.'

And still the mother lay as one dead. Amy did not cry or moan. With a white, scared face, she wandered from one room to the other, shuddering no more at the sight of the blood-stained features on the one bed than at the sudden shriek which every new and then came from her mother's lips.

There was never scene of sorrow or cry of woe in that little village but one person was sure to hurry to help and comfort. That person was the minister, Mr. Little ; he was so good, so wise, so gentle, that he seemed like a father to all who sorrowed or suffered. But he was away from home now ; and who could fill his place to poor Amy ?

The doctor came to her at last. 'My child, this

is too shocking for you. You must go away for a little while; perhaps presently your dear mother may want you badly. Go away with Mrs. Walters and I'll send to you very soon.'

Amy made no objection, though her lips quivered and her hands clasped together tightly.

Mrs. Walters was a good and loving woman, who lived very near to the Grays. She gently led Amy to her own little room, and made her lie down while she darkened the windows and kept perfectly still, hoping that the soothing draught which Amy had just taken from the doctor would make her sleep awhile.

And Amy did sleep; not the fresh, healthy sleep of her usual rest-times, but with a heavy, stupefying torpor; and while she slept she forgot for a time the sorrow which had come so suddenly upon her.

When she roused at last they were waiting for her; her mother was conscious, and wanted her. She crept to her bedside, ready to throw herself into those loving arms and weep over the sorrow which had all come back to her; but they hushed her and warned her. 'She is very ill,' they said; 'the sudden shock has been quite too much for her. She wants you to come and look at your little brother.'

And Amy's heart gave a great leap at the words. No need now to warn her. She crushed down the grief that lay so heavy on her own heart, and

knelt by her mother's side calm and still. 'Poor mother!' she murmured: 'poor, dear, dear mother!' The closed eyes tried to open, and the tears rolled out from beneath the lids and fell gently on Amy's caressing hand.

Presently the mother roused herself a little, and, moving the clothes, disclosed to Amy's view a pretty little baby nestling in the very clothes she had lately been so proud to ornament.

'Oh, he is a beauty, mother!' she whispered; 'the darling little wee thing!'

'He is yours, Amy,' said the low voice. 'Take care of him for father's sake.'

But the mention of his name was too much for the poor stricken heart; and the sobs and cries came so thick and fast that they hurried Amy away again, and placed her by the fire to cherish the poor little one who had entered the world amid such sorrow. The nurse came to and fro, and comforted her as well as she could. 'She is quieter—she is sleeping.' But she said everything in the tone of those who have no hope. Towards morning Amy lay down, still holding the wee baby in her arms. When she woke again the doctor sat by her side.

'My mother?' she said, anxiously looking at him.

'Amy, my child, it is well with her: she passed away in her sleep about an hour ago.'

And Amy held the tiny sleeping infant to her

heart, as her grief burst out in one passionate cry :
'Take us, too, even us also, O Heavenly Father,
and do not leave us alone here without them !'

CHAPTER III.

THREE weeks passed slowly away. There had been an inquest, and a verdict, and a trial. Amy did not seem to heed when they told her that Joe Matson had gone to prison for a year, and that his wife and children were nearly broken-hearted. And there had been the funeral—the two coffins and the one grave. Amy's heart was so sore, and she was so lonely ; even the voice of the minister who read the service was that of a stranger. Oh, what should she do ? If Mr. Little were but here he would know how sad she was, and would think of something to comfort her.

Yes ; she was quite alone. Friends she had ; for there was Mrs. Walters, and her old schoolmistress, and the housekeeper at the Rectory, and many of the farmers' wives, who would have done anything for her ; but otherwise there were none whose kindness and protection she could claim by right of relationship. 'Baby and I are alone in the wide world !'

What she would have done without baby no one knew. His feeble wail roused her; his little ways interested her; and his welfare and comfort called forth all her anxiety. The nurse yet remained with her; but Amy chose to learn how to do everything for him, though he was often tended with trembling hands.

The nurse was a kind, motherly woman; her heart warmed towards the poor, desolate ones, thrown for a time on her care, and she was very anxious about Amy.

‘The baby will do well enough, bless it!’ she said one morning, in answer to some kind inquiries. ‘It’s poor Amy that worries me. If she’d cry and take on, like most young things do, I should know that it was natural, and that such grief would wear itself out in time; but she scarcely sheds a tear. She wanders about with that white, set face of hers, with her lips shut firm, and such heavy dark lines under her eyes. It’s my opinion she’ll be sick soon if some one cannot open her heart for her.’

Three weeks—nearly a month—had passed. Baby was sleeping; the nurse was out; Amy was sitting on the low chair with her hands lying in her lap, when the door opened softly, and Mrs. Little came gently in. She had been speaking to the nurse, and knew exactly how it stood with Amy.

She gently crossed the floor and knelt down by the sorrowing child. She passed one arm round

the girl's shoulders, and drew the head on to her bosom. There she held it, and passed her hand now and then, with a tender motion, over the glossy hair. Amy did not move or speak; she seemed convulsed with the feeling that was getting too strong for her, though she tried hard to keep it back. Presently Mrs. Little spoke. 'My poor, dear child! we are so grieved for your desolation. Your trial is, indeed, a sore burden. Amy, dear, can you feel the Master's love in all this? Can you feel it is love to them who are taken and love to those who remain that has led Him to allow this gourd of yours to wither up?'

'Oh, I think I shall die! it is so hard! it is so hard!' burst out from Amy, with bitter weeping. 'Oh, my father, my mother, what shall I do—what shall I do?'

Mrs. Little did not speak then; she continued gently to stroke the soft hair, and now and then to touch the hot forehead with her lips. When she saw Amy making an effort to control herself she stopped her with, 'Let it come, dear; let it all come; it will do your poor heart good.'

And it did come. Burst after burst of passionate tears rained down her cheeks, till it seemed there was no end to them; heavier and heavier the poor head sank on its resting-place. Mrs. Little was very patient; she waited till the storm of pent-up sorrow should spend itself in all these outbursts,

saying scarcely anything except, 'My poor child ! my poor dear child !' over and over again. At last Amy grew quiet, and sat as though completely exhausted by the very outbreak that had so relieved her heart.

Then, still holding her head, Mrs. Little gently repeated,—

‘ God doth not leave His own.
The night of weeping for a time may last,
Then, all tears past,
His going forth shall as the morning shine,
The sunrise of His favour shall be thine ;
God will not leave His own.

God doth not leave His own.
This sorrow in their life He doth permit,
Yea, chooseth it ;
To speed His children on their heavenward way
He guides the winds. Faith, Hope, and Love all say,
God will not leave His own.’

Then as these words died away Amy looked up, and something of a smile broke over the tear-stained young face as she said,—

‘ Dear lady, I did not know how good you were before !’

‘ My poor, sad child ! come and sit near me, and talk to me about it all.’

And Amy did talk ; the tears had relieved her and opened her heart. She could tell of the dreadful shock the father's death had been, and how it

acted on her mother, and how she too suddenly passed away from her, 'without one good-bye kiss.'

'I think now she thought she would die, ma'am ; for when she showed me dear baby she tried to make me feel that he was to be my very own baby, and she would not have said so if she had believed that she herself would live to have him.'

And then Amy spoke of herself : how her heart had felt like a stone ; how she had seemed to be some one looking at the things that were going on, but having no part or interest in them.

Evidently Amy had made no plan for the future. All her hope and anxiety seemed to be fixed on the tiny infant brother left to her charge.

'I do pray God to spare him and let him grow up good and strong ; he's all I have in the world now.'

Poor Amy ! Those who thought they were her best friends had over and over repeated, 'It would be a mercy if the good Lord would please to take the poor baby.' Mrs. Little herself had expressed the same thought, but she did not say so now.

'Amy, dear,' she said, 'Mr. Little and I have talked much about you. Your father made a friend of him, and I think he knows exactly how his affairs stand. The house, garden, the shop, and adjoining land, were his own, as you know, and he had a good bit of money in the bank—about 200*l.*, I

believe. All this will now come to his children, and the business will bring a good deal if it is sold. Have you thought at all what you would like to do with everything?'

'No, ma'am ; I have just waited to see you.'

'Well, Amy, we wish to help you in every way ; but you must try and think what appears to be the best thing to be done. You could put baby out to nurse, and come and live with me if you liked. You would be a comfort and help to me among my children. Then you could let the house, and by-and-by, when baby is grown big, you could take counsel as to what you would like to do then.'

Amy looked bewildered. The idea of parting with baby and letting strangers come to father's house had been too dreadful to enter her mind. She covered her face with her hands and the tears gently trickled through her fingers.

'Please, ma'am,' she said at last, 'let me think about it awhile. I cannot tell you all I feel to-day.'

'Let it be so then, my child. Mr. Little and I will call and see you again in a day or two. But you must let me see baby ; I have not made the little man's acquaintance, you know.'

And Amy fetched her treasure. She showed his pretty feet and hands ; she pointed out numbers of dawning beauties not easily perceptible to a stranger's eyes.

‘What will you name him, Amy?—Harry, after his poor father?’

‘No, ma’am, I think not. I heard father say that if he ever had a son he should call him Edward, after his own father. He must be my little Eddie, ma’am.’

After some more talk about the pretty baby, Mrs. Little left. The last words she said were these: ‘Amy, you will *pray* as well as *think* over your future plans: will you not, my child?’

And Amy looked a grateful, though tearful promise. She could not speak.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. and Mrs. Little were not long before they came to Amy. They found her with a very pale face and a quiet, gentle manner, but altogether a different Amy to what she had been before the last visit.

After some more talk about the baby, Amy said: ‘I have thought very much, and I have prayed too, about your last kind talk; but the more I think and pray, the less do I feel inclined to give up the dear baby to the care of strangers. I feel as if

father and mother would rather we both stayed together in the home they made for us. I don't think I could leave him—indeed I don't.'

Mr. Little answered her,—

'I quite see your meaning, Amy, and I am sure you are right as to the wishes of your parents. If they had been here to decide I am convinced they would have said, "Let the children keep together." Our thought was for you, my child. You are very young yet to undertake so great a responsibility.'

'I think I could manage, sir,' Amy said. 'I am learning how to do everything for baby, and nurse has promised to stay with me some weeks yet; and then I know Mrs. Walters will help me all she can, and she knows a great deal about babies.'

'That reminds me I have a letter from Fred Walters, Amy, that I wish to consult you upon. Here it is.'

Fred was Mrs. Walters' son, and the last and most promising apprentice Mr. Gray had ever had. He had been out of his time nearly a year, and had been working for a large London firm for the sake of improving himself. Harry Gray had been very fond of the lad, and he had greatly valued his master. If there was one person in the world that Amy in her childhood days had thought of as a hero, that person was Fred Walters: and as for him, he considered his 'master's little daughter just the sweetest little flower that ever bloomed in the

garden. Mr. Little had received the letter only that morning. Amy's eyes filled as she read :

'I know you will be the poor child's chief adviser, and so I write to you. Poor Amy ! my heart aches for her in her desolation. The land, the house and shop, are all the little boy's, I suppose ; for as I am pretty sure there was no will made, the law will give it to him : but the money in the bank and the debts ought to be Amy's. But it is not of this I want to speak most now—about the business. If you decide that it will be best to sell it and the shop, I should like to buy it. You know my father left me money enough, and it is quite worth 150*l.* to any man. I must make a start somewhere soon, and I had sooner come down to the old place than settle anywhere else. And besides, mother and I owe more than we can tell to Mrs. Gray. It will ease my heart if I can be of any use to the poor little girl by keeping things tight and trim about her home.'

'It is a kind and manly letter, Amy,' said Mr. Little, 'and I think it will be best to accept his offer. This money then we can place in the bank for little Eddie's future use if he is spared, and it will become a nice little sum before he wants it.'

'I had much rather see Fred in father's place than anyone else,' said Amy. 'He was always father's right hand, and he has been as kind to me

as a brother—always. Please do quite as you think best about it.’

‘And about yourself, Amy?’

‘I shall stay here with baby, sir, and try and keep things about his home, just as mother would have done. We shall want a little money now and then, but not much: for you know I can sew very nicely, and I mean to work for baby and myself; and there will be no rent to pay.’

So it was decided that Amy and her baby-brother should keep together in the old home, that Fred Walters should purchase the business, and that Amy should give what spare time she had, to working for ladies who were glad to employ her. And so it was that Amy Gray came to be the mistress of the little home we have described to you.

CHAPTER V.

As far as ‘my lord baby’ was concerned the plan answered well; he throve, and grew into a bonny little man, with a very decided will of his own, and yet with a nature so loving and affectionate that Amy had as yet no difficulty in managing him.

Eddie was at once her care and her delight. She worked for him, read for him, walked for him, and played and sang with him. It was a wonder that he was not completely spoiled by such unwearying, unselfish devotion ; indeed he was somewhat of a tyrant, but it was such a sweet tyranny, spoken through such pretty lips and looking severe out of such dear dark-blue eyes, with a little wicked smile peeping everywhere, that Amy just bowed before it gladly and willingly. Eddie had two fast friends besides his sister, Fred Walters and Joe Matson. Fred seemed to look after him with an anxiety second only to his sister's, and the child delighted to play round him while he was at work. As for Joe Matson, when his term of imprisonment had expired, he seemed to attach himself to that pretty baby like a faithful dog. He knew by whose hand the child had been made fatherless, and there was nothing he would not have done or borne so that the child might feel his loss the less. When he first came near the cottage Amy could not look at him without shuddering and tears, but he was so penitent, so broken-hearted, so firm in his resolves never again to touch the poison that had maddened him, that at last Mr. Little pleaded for his forgiveness. From that time he became the child's very devoted slave—a fact of which the young gentleman very soon became aware.

Amy had no care or thought about the garden,

Fred and Joe managed it altogether for her, and by degrees the sunshine came back to her life and the old glad, peaceful look to her face. She was always busy; her household cares, her precious charge, and her sewing, kept her fully employed. We said *the sunshine* came back to her life, and we meant it: for the dear Master had blessed her sad trouble to her, and she was striving day by day to live nearer to Him. Was it any wonder, then, that there was sunshine? Do we realise enough how bright their lot must be who 'walk all day in the light of *His* countenance?'

And so matters went on till Amy was nearly twenty, and her darling a bonny boy of five years old.

There was no doubt in the mind of any who knew them all through this time, what was the nature of the feeling, growing stronger and stronger every day, between Amy and Fred Walters. Although he was nearly ten years older than she was, his affection for her had grown with her growth, till it now ripened into the earnest love of his manhood. He did not tell Amy anything about this; he did not ask her any questions; he knew how she trusted him and cared for him, and he felt that by-and-by, when his mother no longer required his care and support, he might make Amy his wife. And if Amy ever thought of such things—and we suppose she did—she would never have

dreamed of giving herself to anyone else but Fred. 'Only not yet, while Eddie is so young,' she would have added.

Mr. Little also knew well 'which way the wind blew.' He loved Amy almost as though she had been his own child, and he did not know any young man more worthy of his favourite than was Fred Walters, if only ——

Yes, there was something he was not quite satisfied with, even in Fred. He was a fine young man : intelligent, kind-hearted, industrious, merry, and good-tempered. What was the matter, then ? Hear what good Mr. Little said to his wife about it :—

'That he should love our Amy is no wonder, even if she were less a treasure than she is ; the way in which she has been left to his care would be enough to make them regard each other with especial interest ; but I cannot help wishing he was not quite so sure of himself.'

'But he has never given you cause to fear for him, Arthur. Has he ?'

'Mary, "*he thinks he stands.*" Nothing I have ever been able to hint to him has ever shaken his self-confidence, and his great danger lies in the possession of those very virtues for which others admire him.'

'I am not quite sure that I understand you, Arthur.'

‘Fred is merry, witty, and open-handed. He is excellent company, and he is of a very sociable disposition. There happens to be a scarcity of such young fellows round us and he is very much sought after. At first he used to spend an evening at this house or that house, and he was more and more admired as he became more and more prosperous. I only heard last week that occasionally he has spent the evening with a good many of his friends at the Nag’s Head Inn; and knowing all I know of his character, and of the danger of once stepping into *that* path, I cannot but feel very anxious. Of course Amy knows nothing of such fears, and I mean to see Fred to-day and to have a long talk with him.’

So it came to pass that when Fred was sauntering home that evening Mr. Little met him.

‘Mr. Walters, you are just the person I was looking for. I want your help and co-operation in a little matter which occupies my thoughts a good deal just now. Can you spare me half-an-hour’s chat?’

‘Of course I can, sir; come in here and sit down.’

Mr. Little having seated himself, thus spoke:—

‘For some time the attention of the clergy of the Church of England has been called by the Archbishops and Bishops to the lamentable state to which the country is likely to be reduced by drunkenness, and they have been invited and

advised to take some decided stand against the steadily increasing evil. Meetings have been held and resolutions passed, and a number of my brethren all over the land have established Temperance Societies in their parishes. Now I suppose that we, as a parish, are not to be called great drinkers, but when the evil with all its fearful effects is brought home to my mind by statistics and reports, I feel quite sure that as a parish we have entered the downward path, and that we drink a great deal too much. I have determined, therefore, to follow the example which so many have set me, and to try and establish a Church Temperance Association here. I shall want the aid and all the influence which my young men can give me. Will you be one on my committee?’

Fred Walters very seldom felt awkward and confused, but he felt awkward and confused now.

‘Well, I don’t know, sir. You know I should be proud to join you in any good thing, but I am not quite sure this *would be* a good thing. A little pleasant drink is a comfort and help to a man, and it is one of the good gifts of God, too.’

‘So are many other things, Mr. Walters. Medicines, and some poisons, too. All have their purpose, but we do not indulge in them except of necessity.’

‘Our Saviour drank wine, sir. It seems the Bible allowed the use of it.’

'And the Bible also says, "Look not on the wine when it is red; it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." And again: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; that go to seek mixed wine." (Prov. xxiii. 29-32.) And St. Paul tells the Romans, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is made weak." So, I think, the Bible says quite enough to give us authority for abstaining from its use.'

'Well, but, sir, all the doctors say it is a good thing for people to take a little; there would be a great deal of sickness without it.'

'There you make a mistake, Mr. Walters. For a long time it was the opinion of our highest medical authorities that *a little*, as you say, did good. Just read over this little paper.'

Fred took the paper Mr. Little offered and read slowly to himself,—

'All alcoholic beverages are injurious to health. The *Lancet* says, "The smallest quantity of alcohol takes somewhat from the strength of the muscles, from the ability to endure exposure of temperature, from the clearness of the head, and from the activity of the mind." Sir Henry Thompson writes: "Don't take your daily wine under any pretext of its doing

you good. Take it frankly as a luxury, *and one which must be paid for*; by some persons paid for lightly, and by others at a very high price, but *always to be paid for.*" And mostly some loss of health, or of mental power, or of calmness of temper, or of judgment, is the price. More than 2000 of the leading physicians of the day, including Sir Benjamin Brodie and others, have signed a paper stating it as their opinion that "Total and universal abstinence from alcoholic liquors and intoxicating beverages of all sorts would greatly contribute to the *health, prosperity, morality, and happiness*, of the human race." Besides these and hundreds of other like testimonies, we know that our gaols are filled, our lunatic asylums peopled, and the gallows supplied with murderers, through the influence of strong drink. Thousands and thousands of drunkards' graves are dug every year in England. Where do all these drunkards come from? Why, from the moderate drinkers of last year. No man drinks immoderately at first. It is "a little"—"just enough to do me good," that leads them into the dangerous road. Every man, however sottish now, was a moderate drinker once, and each, without intending to do so, went sliding down, down, down to ruin.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Fred, returning the paper with a disturbed look on his face. 'It seems to deal pretty severely with the subject. I'll think

about the matter, but I can't say that I take kindly to the movement.'

Mr. Little felt he had succeeded in calling Fred's attention to the danger if he had done nothing else, but he felt troubled as he walked home.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Temperance Society was formed and Fred Walters was *not* on the Committee. It was when Amy was looking over the papers respecting its aim that she missed Fred's name from among its promoters. Joe Matson had brought these papers for her inspection, he having been one of the first to join the Society.

'I wonder why Mr. Walters' name is not down,' said she. 'I am sure he would be one of the first to help in such a cause.'

'I don't know, missy,' said Joe; 'perhaps now he and the other young men like to go sometimes to the Nag's Head to enjoy their evenings, he don't like to leave them there alone.' And Joe looked another way, for though he intended to say as much as he had said, he did not like to watch the effect of his words.

Poor Amy! it seemed as though some one had

rudely torn the veil from her eyes and exposed them to the glare of the noonday sun; and the pain entered her head and her brain. Could it be true? She had never dreamed of this! And what could she do? If matters had been explained between them—if they had been really engaged—then it would be so much easier; but now it would be so hard for her to say anything. But she would speak. He was her friend, and he had been so good to her. Surely she might at least warn him?

So the next time Fred came in, she showed him Joe's papers, and pointed out to him that his name was not among them. Now Fred was secretly very much annoyed at the printing of those papers. He felt as though they were a reproach to him that he had not enrolled himself as one of those who stood with their pastor against any evil thing. He did not care to give up his popularity, and the company of his many admiring friends, and make himself a laughing-stock among them, and he was vexed with Mr. Little for disturbing his peace. And he felt vexed with Amy, too; why should *she* think it necessary for him to join 'a Temperance Society?' He had been kind enough to her, at any rate. So Fred Walters, with his conscience disturbed and his vanity wounded, listened with a good deal of impatience to Amy's gentle arguments.

'Don't you fear for me, Amy,' he said at last. 'I am quite able to take care of myself. If ever

you see me taking too much, then tell me that you'll have nothing more to with me; that will bring me to my senses. I came in to ask you if you would let me have Eddie this afternoon. I am going for a drive, to order some timber, and the day is so lovely it will do him good.'

These excursions with Fred Walters were an especial delight to Eddie, and he joined his entreaties to Fred's for the holiday. So Amy dressed him, and kissed him over and over, and let him go.

But she sat over her sewing with a very heavy heart. It seemed to her simple young mind a thing about which there need not have been a moment's hesitation, and that because there was hesitation, it showed that 'the plague had begun.' She had read Joe's card, too—his card of membership, and it seemed such a good thing to put one's name to. These were the words:—

'I recognise my duty as a Christian to exert myself for the suppression of intemperance, and, having become a member of this Society, to do my utmost, both by example and effort, to promote its objects.'

Then followed the signatures of the member and of the clergyman who witnessed it, and at the end a little prayer for 'the grace of the Holy Spirit, that I may practise strict temperance, soberness, and chastity, and daily increase in every good word and work.'

And Fred—*her Fred*—had refused to give this thing his support, and had joined himself to those who ridiculed its purpose! Yes, poor Amy sat over her sewing with a sore heart.

Eddie enjoyed his ride vastly; the little town presented a busy scene, for it was market-day. Eddie did not notice that Fred was less merry than usual; he had prattle and pleasure enough to serve any reasonable being in his own little self, and so he did not miss anything when other people were silent. They were late in leaving the town. Eddie did not like the last hour or two. Mr. Walters left him in the care of the woman at the hotel and went away with some friends; when he came back he was as merry as ever he was, and, poor little tired Eddie thought, 'More noisy than ever I am at home, even when I play at trains being smashed up.'

Yes, Fred was in high spirits—quite excited; he rattled out one lively song after another as they drove down the country roads, till Eddie wondered how he could remember so many. He had been drinking wine with his friends. 'Not too much,'—oh, no!—'just enough' to raise his spirits; just enough to cloud his judgment, and to turn his prudence into recklessness.

'Make him gallop,' said Eddie. And the whip was applied to the horse, and he did gallop; rattling along with such a swing and a jolt that Eddie

clapped his little hands and laughed aloud. By-and-by another spring-cart came nearly up to them; there were men in that, too, who had only been taking 'just enough.' 'Don't let them get first,' Eddie said. And at the touch of the whip, away went the horse again; faster now, for the rattle of the wheels behind him and the noisy shouts of the other men rather frightened him. Faster he clattered on, and faster came on the other conveyance, with more noise and more shouting. Now they were up with them!—now nearly abreast!—when another cut with the whip made Fred's horse plunge forward again. So it went on, till that which was begun to please the fancy of a little child was carried on in real earnest. And the men got angry over it, too; one or another would take some little advantage, and then would come bitter words. How many unnecessary lashes the poor horses received it would be hard to say. Fred, usually so tender and merciful to every living thing, cared little now what pain he inflicted. Fred, usually so careful over the precious little orphan lad beside him, forgot him altogether now; did not see that the child had got terrified, and, with white face, was holding to the sides of the cart lest he should fall off the seat.

On they dashed, nearly abreast now. A very little while must decide it, for the road would soon become too narrow for both to pass the bend at

once. Which would get through first was the question, but it was a question never decided. The men in the other cart grew furious, and suddenly lashing their horse he darted forward; there were a few curses—wheels interlocked—a sudden stop, and then one horse dashed down the road, dragging after him some broken shafts; the other lay quivering and trembling in the dust, and both carts were overturned in the road and their inmates pitched out.

The men picked themselves up, grumbling, bruised, and shaken. Fred's vehicle had received most damage. It had turned completely upside down, and one wheel was wrenched off; its master lay stunned on the grass by the roadside, with one leg doubled under him. It was a sad sight of ruin and danger; but the most pitiful part of it all was the two little plump legs, cased in pretty scarlet stockings and trim boots, across which one side of the overturned cart lay heavily.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE little leg is broken,' said the doctor; 'the other is only badly bruised. You must keep him

in bed, and as quiet as possible. He is sure to do well, with your good nursing, I know.' This in one cottage a few hours after the 'accident.'

'It is a compound fracture of the thigh, and there is a great deal of fever. I am afraid it will be necessary to amputate. It is impossible for such a mangled limb ever to right itself. I am going to ride over at once for some clever surgical aid.' This to Mr. Little, standing by Fred's bedside in the other cottage.

'Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath wounds without cause?'

The little one did keep quiet, and he did do well with Amy's tender nursing. He is now a stout, strong fellow, who whistles all the way to school and all the way back again. Very often he is joined by a poor, crippled man, with only one leg, who hobbles beside him on crutches—a man who ought now to be in his prime, doing life's work nobly and gladly, lessening the evil and increasing the good, but who is maimed and helpless for life. Poor Fred Walters!—so proud of his strength—he has learned by sad experience that what is called '*just enough*' is over and over again proved to be '*far too much*.'

Amy often visited him during his long, long illness. He learned to look at things with very different eyes under her gentle influence and Mr. Little's teaching, and he learned, too, with a bitter

pang, the full value of the future he had lost. No more dreams for him now, where he pictured himself a proud husband or a glad father. All that was past.

He still goes down to the shop, where Joe Matson is chief manager, and in which Eddie still takes especial interest. There is no doubt that by-and-by he may take his father's old business again. Fred and he often talk about it. It is to be Fred's free gift to him. 'A sign between us, old boy, that you have forgiven me for nearly being the death of you,' he often says.

Amy is still the same sweet, unselfish sister and friend. I do not think she will ever marry anyone. Certainly not Fred. His health is so broken that no one expects that he will be very long here. And he longs for his rest. He is an abstainer now, but he will not join the Society. 'No,' he said to Mr. Little, 'I would not give it my support in the days of my strength, and I will not come to it now that I am a poor, helpless burden. If I had only heeded when you spoke to me then, sir, I should not have been in this condition now.'

Dear young friends, this is no fancy sketch. You can scarcely take up a newspaper without coming across facts, the details of which are quite as sad as those of which we have been writing. There is a great evil stalking abroad among us, slaying its

thousands and its tens of thousands. As far as in you lies will you stretch out your hand against it? Oh, for the sake of those who are weak and stumbling, let us pray for the spirit which animated St. Paul, that we may neither eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything, by which we may make a brother to offend.

JACK FROG'S LITTLE MAID.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'MADEMOISELLE MORI,' 'L'ATELIER DU LYS,' &c.

PART I.

ST. PETROX is one of those towns in the west of England which have sprung up since railroads opened districts which until late years have seemed quite out of reach. Half a century ago it was a small fishing village, on the shore of a deep bay, so quiet and landlocked that it might almost have been a foreign lake. The soft climate and lovely situation gradually attracted invalid visitors ; houses began to be built in sheltered spots on the cliffs ; shops became necessary ; a little town grew up, at first very gradually, then rapidly, when a railroad was made along the coast, with a station at St. Petrox. New houses were built yearly, many more than were really wanted, a public promenade was

made, a quay, a main street facing the harbour, with large shops, above which were apartments to let. Behind all this was a part of which visitors knew very little, with small houses and shops and far too many public-houses. One of these back-streets was built on so steep a hill-side that no cart or carriage could go up or down it; even on foot it was not easy to descend, and in rainy weather the water rushed down as if it had been the bed of a torrent, sweeping away the red earth from between the stones, and disappearing as soon as the supplies from overhead ceased. There could be no regularity of building in such a situation. The houses, all poor and small, stood where they could, and as they could. Thanks to this, there was plenty of light and air in Parret Street, except in some rooms which were little better than cellars.

It was in such streets as these that the laundresses, needlewomen, fly-drivers, and masons lived; the fisher-folk congregated nearer the shore. Parret Street possessed three shops—a baker's, a grocer's, and that of a basket-maker, who supplied a much larger and more pretentious establishment in the fashionable part of the town. He also carried on a little trade for himself; visitors sometimes made their way to Parret Street, directed by some one who knew him, and gave him an order. But it was a great disadvantage that he could not afford to live in a less out-of-the-way place. He was a

Frenchman, and the neighbours all called him Jack Frog, without troubling themselves as to his real name ; even his landlady never got beyond Mr. Frog, but he signed his receipts Jean Rigault. He had lived for some years in Parret Street, ever since a district visitor found him lying at death's door in a little inn where only the poorest travellers went. He seemed chiefly ill of want, and, even when money was given him, ran great risk of starving, simply because he could not eat the coarsely cooked English food set before him.

It was not a pleasant place for a lady to go to, and Jean Rigault never forgot how Miss Norris came day after day, fed him with beef-tea, and tried to talk to him in his own language, though she was painfully shy of attempting a tongue which she knew but imperfectly, and secretly feared that the Frenchman might be laughing at her accent and her blunders. She need not have feared. Rigault had too much native politeness to amuse himself at the expense of a lady who was trying to be kind to him, and he had a grateful heart. She learned by degrees that he had been mixed up in a conspiracy against the Emperor Louis Napoleon—France was just then rife with conspiracies—he had been in great danger, and having escaped to England dared not return home. The question now was how to get a living.

Happily Frenchmen are singularly ingenious, and

seldom fail to find some means of support. Although it was not his original trade, Rigault proved himself capable of making chairs and baskets of shapes and colours which took the fancy of St. Petrox, and brought him in enough to live on—perhaps something more. He took a lodging in Parret Street, because it was in Miss Norris's district; and after a time every one got used to his black eyes, and sallow face, and broken English, but he held aloof from all intimacy, and none was pressed on the 'Frenchy,' whom they called in a simple, matter-of-course way Jack Frog. He was courteous and obliging enough, lending a ready and dexterous hand now here, now there, but he was unsociable. He detested beer, he did not smoke, he lived on incredibly little food, frying his eggs, heating his coffee, buying nobody knew what rubbish, his landlady said, and making soup out of it; and if he went out it was to pick a salad of what she called 'nasty weeds' in the lanes. He never entered church or chapel, and though he did not work on Sundays, he spent it in reading such books in his own language as Miss Norris could borrow for him.

After ten years of this life nobody thought any more about 'the Frenchy;' he went his way, and the neighbours theirs. He never got a letter, and if he had relations he must have been renounced by them, or have given them no clue where to find

him. Perhaps he preferred this lonely life, and yet if anyone had noticed the deep, mournful yearning with which his eyes were sometimes fixed on the little children playing before his door, or on Sundays going by prattling and holding to a father's finger, they would have felt how deep was the solitude in which this man lived, and how it weighed on him. He was a stranger among these people, and would be so to the end. Sometimes one or two would come into the shop, if he had a basket of a new pattern in the window, and talk as if he were not there; and he would listen with a half-sad, half-humorous look to the remarks which they still supposed him unable to understand, simply because ten years ago he could not have done so. They would still choose their words and raise their voices to speak to him, fully believing that to shout made their meaning clearer, and he never troubled himself to assert what he knew nothing would make them believe—that he understood them perfectly.

Rigault of course had not the house to himself. Overhead lived his landlady and her family, and above them a charwoman, and an old cripple with a daughter who was a laundress. They had not much to do with one another, beyond an occasional squabble as to whose turn it was to clean the stairs. Behind the house was a very small court, with a

shed where washing could be done, and a couple of rooms so wretched that they were only let to some very poor tenant, who wanted a temporary home. They were often empty, but when Rigault had been about ten years in St. Petrox, they were inhabited, and by a tenant whom the landlady—a widow and quiet woman—would have fain got rid of, but knew not how. A man whose occupation was hawking fish about on a barrow, took them, and brought there his wife and a child. The woman was slowly dying of a hard life and ill-usage. The child was her niece.

Very little was seen of either ; the woman took to her bed, waited on only by the little girl. As for the man, if he sold his fish he sat and drank his earnings in the public-house ; if not, he came home in a savage temper, and beat both wife and child, sometimes dragging the sick woman out of her miserable bed to ill-use her. She died, and for a few days one and another took some care of the child, who seemed about six years old, so small was she, but really her age was eight or nine. She was a little, thin, frightened creature, half starved, and shrinking as if she expected a blow every moment. Then they let her go back to the man she called Uncle. They cried shame upon his neglect and cruelty, but they did not like to have anything to do with him, as they must have done had they

interested themselves about the child ; she was nothing to them, and they had their own families to look after.

It became a very anxious matter to Mrs. Yeo, the owner of the house, how to get rid of the tenant in the back court. She even came to consult Rigault about it, having before now found him a man of wise counsel. 'That there Delves, he owes me three months' rent, he do,' she said, 'and not a halfpenny shall I ever see of it ; but if he would only go I'd let him, and say no more about it. But he won't go, and how to get rid of him quietly is more than I know. He came in just now drunk and so savage I did not dare to speak to him. I had to get out of the way quick, and in my own house, too ! and now . . . Ah, there, I thought so ! I can't bear to hear it !' she cried, stamping her foot as a sharp cry, like that of an animal in great pain and terror rang through the house. 'I wish the law would take hold of him. I don't know what 'tis good for, upon my word. He's beating that child again ; he's mad at having her on his hands, and yet I think he'd be sorry not to have her to kick and abuse !'

Again the cry, full of fright and agony, rang out. Rigault had started when first he heard it ; now he stood up, and laid aside the osiers in his hand. 'He will not hurt me,' he said, in answer to Mrs.

Yeo's remonstrances, and he went through the house and out into the damp little sunless yard, knocking at the door of Delves' room. A fierce oath, and 'Who's there?' answered. He opened the door.

Besides a table and broken chair there was no furniture whatever in the room. A man turned angrily to face him, with a strap in his hand, and a child crouched on the stone floor at his feet.

A glow kindled in Rigault's dark southern eyes, but he only said politely, 'Neighbour, if you can spare the little one to help sweep my room I shall be much obliged, and will pay for her time.'

'Take her altogether if you want her, drat her!' said the man, roughly shoving her with his foot. 'She's none of mine, the beggar's brat—get up, can't you?' enforcing the words with a curse. The child stood up with difficulty, trembling all over.

'None of yours?' said Rigault, still with the same grave politeness, which seemed to have some effect, even on the tipsy Delves, for he answered sullenly, but less savagely, 'No more than that cat of yours is. I'll send her to the workhouse one of these days.'

'Then perhaps you would not object to parting with her?'

Delves stood in suspicious wonder. 'Don't you think to pass your jokes on me, master, or you'll

find I can joke in a way you mayn't like. Part with her! who wants the little beggar?'

'I could make her useful,' was Rigault's quiet response.

'Well, then, you may have her for ten bob!' cried Delves, slapping his hand on the table.

'That is too much. I can't afford it,' said Rigault, shaking his head.

'Will you give five then?'

'Well, I can perhaps manage that, on condition you state before Mrs. Yeo there'—the landlady had been unable to resist stealing near to listen, but had certainly not intended to be brought into the business—'that you give her up to me, Jean Rigault, and make no claim on her at any future time.'

'Say seven, and you may have the little hussy, hang her!' said Delves, shaking the strap at the cowering child.

'Step this way, and I'll give you the money,' answered Rigault. 'Come, little one.' But the child only looked at him with wide, terrified eyes. He saved her from a blow by stepping quickly between her and Delves, and led her unresisting to his workshop, where the money was duly paid. Delves marched off to the public-house swearing he was glad to be rid of the jade; and Mrs. Yeo stood all amazement, looking from Rigault, who had quietly resumed his work, to the child, who had shrunk to the furthest corner of the room.


'And what do you mean to do with her, Mr. Frog?' she asked.

'Keep her. Would I leave her in the hands of that brute?' exclaimed Rigault sharply.

'Well!' was all Mrs. Yeo found to say, but conscience pricked her for having thought of nothing beyond the rent and the annoyance of Delves' presence, and she added presently, 'She can sleep with my Sarah Ann, if you like, and I'll look a bit to them rags of hers. Well, you do get on with your work; I never saw one to work as you do!'

'I shall have two to keep now,' said Rigault, his dark face growing very soft and tender.

'You'll find you've taken a good bit on your shoulders, and times are hard!' said the landlady. Rigault knew it, and seven shillings out of his earnings was a very large sum for him. Yet his look grew gentler and happier than it had been for years as he looked at the child, crouching among the baskets, with an habitual fear, piteous to see. He let her quite alone, and worked at his baskets, while her eyes followed him as those of a trapped animal might the captor who would soon seize and kill it. A little stir near her made her start violently; then a pink colour came suddenly into her thin face; her lips parted, she looked timidly at Rigault, who only smiled, and then she put out her hand, and stroked the ears of a white rabbit, which he had tamed and kept in a cage in the



shop, and which now put its head out, demanding in rabbit fashion to be fed. A heap of sow-thistle lay near. Still glancing fearfully at Rigault she ventured to take a leaf and feed the pretty creature. A little cry of surprise and pleasure escaped her as she perceived curled up within the cage a sleeping kitten, whose long grey fur and feathery tail made it a wonderful and unknown creature to her. Rigault had saved it from some boys who were amusing themselves by drowning it slowly in shallow water—saved it with a burst of fiery contempt and indignation which even penetrated their dull minds, and stung them with shame which perhaps might do them good.

Rigault nodded kindly, and she was emboldened to ask, 'Be they yours? Don't they quarrel?' When told the history of both she listened with eager interest, gradually coming nearer. 'You don't beat they,' she said reflectively when the kitten awaking with a dart and a bound sprang on his knee, and rubbed her head with inconvenient pertinacity against the osiers in his hands. 'Yon's never been beat, I reckon.' She looked wistfully at him, and just then a customer entering made her fly back to the far end of the shop with a sort of sob of terror. Rigault could not attend to her until the business was transacted, then he asked in his kind voice what had so frightened her. She glanced about, crept near, and whispered,

'He'll take me back, he will !' Rigault assured her that there was no danger of this, but the dread was too deeply rooted to be shaken, and at every shadow which darkened the doorway she darted back to her corner.

There was no need for her fears, however ; though the neighbours had never interfered with Delves' brutal treatment of the child they all rose against him for having sold her, and supported Mrs. Yeo's determination to get rid of him. He did not belong to St. Petrox, and had no settled occupation there, and soon left the place, but the fear of his return long haunted the child. Jack Frog's kindness to her touched his neighbours, and several lent a hand in making a tidy little lass out of the waif and stray ; but Rigault's work was unusually slack for a fortnight after her arrival, and he had spent all his ready money in buying her freedom, and on decent clothes for her. It was an anxious time, and while she grew more at home and less frightened daily, he grew more down-hearted. The thought would come—suppose after all he could not support her ? There would be nothing for it then but to send her to the work-house, and that he could not bear to think of.

While he was mending a neighbour's chair, having more baskets on hand than enough, and thinking sorrowfully over his position, his old friend Miss Norris came in. The story had reached her

that Jack Frog had adopted a little maid—as the word there was for girl—and she greeted him warmly, and spoke kindly to the little one, who made no response, and got behind Rigault's chair when asked her name. 'Well, madame, she says she has no name but Pug,' said Rigault, smiling, 'but I call her Yvonne—after my dead sister,' he added softly.

'But has she not been christened? You must send her to my Sunday class, Mr. Rigault.'

'Madame is very good,' said Rigault, bowing gratefully, but embarrassed. 'I do not know . . . she is such a frightened little thing. I had thought to teach her myself—to read and write, I would say. I do not wish her to be like girls such as those . . .' and he pointed to the street where three bold laughing girls were exchanging noisy jokes with a couple of grown-up lads.

'They are not all like that; she need not have such companions,' said Miss Norris, but she sighed, and her kind face clouded with the deep anxiety which a Christian woman must feel who cares for the young girls around her when she sees them taking the first step in that downward road which leads to destruction of soul and body.

'I prefer to teach her myself,' Rigault repeated, though gratefully.

'Yes, but . . . can you teach her about the God who made her, and the Lord who died for her?'

asked Miss Norris, in a low voice, her kind eyes looking anxiously at him. He made no answer, and after a pause she said cheerfully, 'If I were you I would at all events send her to the Sunday school; she might come with Sarah Ann, you know, who is a steady, good girl.'

Rigault still hesitated, but to his extreme surprise the little one pulled his sleeve and muttered, 'I'll go, daddy.' She had bestowed this name on him of her own accord.

'You want to go to school!' She nodded, and after that there was a little talk which settled the matter. She explained further when Miss Norris was gone by saying—'She's kind, she is; she stroked Minetie, and she brought some parsley for Blanche fleur' (the rabbit). 'I'd like to go and learn with her. What's being christened, daddy? Getting a name? I'll be christened too, then, for I won't never be called Pug any more—I hate that name; I'll have one of my own. *He* called me Pug,' she added, lowering her voice, 'and he wouldn't never let aunt call me nothing else. I'll go to school and I'll be christened—so there!'

The child was in fact a curious mixture of timidity and audacity. There was a spice of adventure in going to that unknown region—school, which Sarah Ann had already described to her, and she was won by the kind face of the visitor, whose coming had

another important result. Rigault's troubled look when asked how he should meet this new expense had betrayed his difficulties. Miss Norris had no money to spare, but she knew a lady with only too much, who was always delighted by a romantic story, and who when told of his adoption of of 'Yvonne' at once discovered that she must see him and the child, and came to his shop with an order, small in her eyes, but a large one in his. She told the story to others, some of whom remained steady customers long after she had forgotten all about him.

He sometimes thought that Yvonne had brought prosperity with her. She had brought more; a blessing had entered with her. Hitherto he had been an irreligious man, more from want of teaching than anything else; and in a strange land, with an unfamiliar language, it never occurred to him as even possible that he should go to a place of worship. He expected to train Yvonne through love for himself, but though she gave him ardent affection he found that the motive was not strong enough to make her a truthful and obedient child. She had hitherto had no training, and was so used to ill-treatment that she lied habitually lest she should be blamed. His sorrow when she was naughty first surprised, then touched, and to a certain degree restrained her, and helped her to understand Miss Norris's teaching.

It seemed so doubtful whether she had been christened that a provisional baptism was necessary, but she was too old to be treated as an infant, and her good friend came frequently to teach her, and lead her to understand the promises to be made for her. It was certainly necessary that she should look on the ceremony as something more than a means of getting rid of that name of 'Pug' which she so disliked. Miss Norris taught her in the simplest, most earnest words she could think of. Rigault listened too, though he seemed taken up with his work. He stood by, with reverent interest when the day came on which Yvonne was led up to the font; there were tears in his eyes, and on the next Sunday he took her, not to the parish church, which he persisted in declaring was only meant for gentlefolks, but to the little mission chapel, where a young and very earnest clergyman spoke in the plainest way possible to men and women gathered from back streets and poor homes. This suited Rigault; Yvonne on her part was delighted with the hearty singing of the hymns, which luckily chanced to be two which she had learned by heart, and Rigault came home that evening with a wonder in his heart that he should be the happy man he felt himself. No father could have looked down more tenderly on the child skipping beside him; her prattle was music to his ears, and he asked that great Father of whom he was beginning

to know something to help him to bring her up a good, pure girl, as happy as she was then.

'I've got most by my bargain,' he would say, when anyone alluded to his adoption of the child; but he did not explain what he meant, and nobody but Miss Norris guessed it.

Time went on, and people began to forget that 'Jack Frog's little maid' was not really his daughter. No father could have been more loving than he to the child who was all he had to care for, and who filled what would else have been an empty future with hopes and cares. He brought her up in a fashion by no means popular. Although he sent her regularly to the Sunday-school he kept her at home on week days, alleging truly that he could teach her while at his work; and indeed she got such an education as no other girl of her rank in St. Petrox could have had. She learned to read and write in English and French, indeed the latter tongue was almost more familiar than her own. No one knew how pleasant it was to Rigault to hear his own language in this strange land. He also taught her arithmetic, and in short, as the neighbours said with some bitterness, 'brought her up just like a lady'—in other words, he shielded her from all that was rough and evil, and kept her from that knowledge of sin so sadly common in her rank, and so apt to blunt a righteous fear and horror of it. It was mainly his stern refusal to let

her play in the streets or make friends with any but the steadiest girls which angered his neighbours. They said that Yvonne was 'stuck up,' and were indignant that 'the Frenchy' should be more particular about his girl than they were about theirs. At times she had to endure a good deal of small persecution, which she did not always meet patiently, especially when the children shouted 'Pug' and 'Froggy' after her; but at least it had the good effect of making her like best of all to be with Rigault and his pets. A greater contrast could hardly have been found than the fair and blue-eyed child and the swarthy foreigner—a strange pair, but perfectly happy together. Of a summer evening they would go on the sea-shore, or into the fields and come back with their hands full of 'salad,' for themselves or the rabbit. Yvonne became a handy little cook, in Rigault's fashion, and learned to make beds and scour floors from Sarah Ann; so that when that tall damsel got a place, Yvonne hardly let Mrs. Yeo feel that she missed her. Sarah Ann had been her only close friend, and her loss made her turn more than ever to Rigault for companionship. He had always been a sad and silent man, and though no longer sad, he said little, but his nod and smile—a smile like a flash of sunshine, lighting up his whole face—seemed enough to satisfy her. She was one of those children whose nature it is to be occupied; who, grown older, would never see work wanting

some one to do it without being impelled to lend a hand. Having plenty to do, she was thoroughly contented.

Mrs. Yeo took quite a motherly interest in Yvonne's pretty ways and looks, and upheld Rigault's system of education against all objectors, pointing triumphantly to the result. 'He's wonderful wise with her; no one would think he was a Frenchy,' she would say with astonishment. And indeed many mothers, if they only would have done so, might have taken pattern with great advantage of Rigault's careful bringing up of his charge.

PART II.

For some years Rigault's adopted child gave him only pleasure. Then she caught a fever, prevalent in the town, and had it severely.

If Rigault did not fully know how Yvonne had twined herself round his heart, he learned it then, as he stood by her bed and saw her toss in pain which he could not soothe, without recognising him, and haunted by wild terror, which seemed to have revived after all these years to agonize her with dread that Delves had returned to carry her off. Rigault learnt then what it is to see the one best loved suffer, and stand by helpless, and pray

broken, almost despairing prayers that even if life be not granted, such pain may be spared.

Well indeed for him that he had learned to pray! Strange to say, his faith seemed to be strengthened by the anguish he was feeling; and when the child was worst, a conviction that somehow his prayers were heard, even if not answered as he asked, came to him, and helped him through that time. It passed away, and left her so weak that the anxiety rather grew than lessened. 'I'm so tired,' she would repeat wearily, moving her thin face to find some cool spot in the pillow.

It was midsummer, and hot everywhere, even in houses with gardens and sun-blinds, and the evening breeze from the sea blowing over them. In Parret Street it was very hot indeed, and as for Yvonne's little room under the roof, it was stifling. The doctor told Rigault that as long as she stayed there she could get no better. She ought to go to the Convalescent Home at Coscombe; perhaps a ticket might be got, if he could not pay for her. But it was not Rigault's way to go about asking favours, and he knew no one who had tickets to give away. Miss Norris was absent, paying an annual visit to friends; the town was always empty, and work slack at this time; he could only earn enough for daily bread, and had pinched himself sorely to get beef-tea and milk for Yvonne, and there was the doctor's bill coming. It was impossible to pay a

guinea a-week for two months or more ! The night after the plan was suggested was the hottest of the summer ; the sultry air came hot to the lips ; even those well could not sleep, and the sick could scarcely live through the oppressive hours. Rigault stood by Yvonne, fanning her ; the child's exhausted state alarmed him exceedingly ; he gave her water, but that was hot like everything else, and she pushed it away with tears of weakness and disappointment. A great fear seized on him that he should lose her after all, and a groan escaped him. He stood in silence, looking down on the sick child, while the hardest struggle he had ever gone through went on in his mind. 'I would not do it for myself if I were starving—I *did* not,' he muttered, wrung with pain and indecision. Just then Yvonne moaned and held out her thin arms with a faint, 'Can't *you* help me, daddy?'

'Yes, my darling, my life,' he answered vehemently, kissing the little fevered hands again and again. 'Listen, you shall go to the better air, you shall get well, the doctor promises it—it shall be !'

The mere thought of change seemed to revive the child ; her voice was stronger as she asked when and where. He told her all he knew about the hospital, and passed over her questions, would he go too ? He could not leave his work, especially just then, when he wanted all he could possibly earn.

The next day he wrote two letters and posted them himself. One was to the manager of the Home. Both were quickly answered, and Yvonne soon found herself away from hot streets and noisy neighbours, in fresh moorland air, amid kind people, with health fast returning. She came back so grown that Rigault started at the sight of her, and then joyfully assured himself that she had come home blithe and happy. He had been unusually moody all the time she was away; Mrs. Yeo thought because he missed her grievously, but perhaps there was a further reason which that good woman did not guess. She often marvelled however how he had paid for that visit to the Home—‘Not out of his earnings, I know,’ she would say, ‘and he has pinched himself all the summer even to pay the doctor’s bill, though he won’t let the child feel it.’ She could not solve this mystery, nor did Yvonne, if she ever thought about it. Perhaps she, too, mistook a little the meaning of the fond and wistful looks he would give her—looks such as we turn on some one very dear who has cost us a great sacrifice or keen pain and never guessed it. She thought he was still anxious, and would come and kiss him and say, ‘Coscombe has made me quite well, daddy.’ And indeed no better way could have been found to clear the cloud from his face than those words.

Yvonne was now fourteen, and old enough to do

something for herself, Mrs. Yeo said, a view which the girl was ready enough to adopt. Rigault, however, urged wistfully that though service was an honourable calling, he would like to keep her near him, and what should he see of her if she got 'a place' as Sarah Ann had done?

It ended in her being apprenticed to a dress-maker, who now had a room in the house, and Rigault thought that she might by-and-by work at home, or go out occasionally to ladies' houses. But as she grew older Yvonne began to long to see a little more of life than she could from the basket-maker's windows, and to have companions of her own age; and she frankly said so. They loved each other too much for her to fear that he would be wounded, and though he stifled a sigh, he knew it was only natural, and cast about to carry out her wishes. Her knowledge of French now proved valuable; she was received into the work-room of one of the chief milliners, because she could act as interpreter for foreign customers. There were often foreigners in winter at St. Petrox, and she was a pretty girl, who set off a dress or mantle when customers wanted to see how they looked, apparently supposing they would have just the same effect on a thin middle-aged lady or a stout young one as on Yvonne's pretty figure.


For a girl of seventeen it was a prosperous start in life, but all states have their special trials, and

there were many in this which Yvonne had never guessed when dreaming of the delights of being one of Mrs. Leeson's 'young ladies.' One or two were kind, good girls, but others were jealous of her, and made her feel keenly what she had forgotten—that she was a nameless orphan, showing her petty spite and malice, mocking at her when her ways were unlike theirs just as vulgarly, if they had but known it, as ever the boys and girls in Parret Street had done, or forcing her to hear talk which made her cheeks burn with shame. Yvonne had a sweet temper, but it could flash out, and she would utter her indignation in a way that made enemies, though it was surely better to risk this than tamely to give in to what no modest girl could hear without a blush, or to encourage it, as one or two did out of mere weakness, by listening with a laugh.

'I feel as if they spattered me with mud, inside and out!' she once said, with tears of shame and anger. 'You don't know what I have to hear when the girls get talking! They to call themselves "young ladies!"'

Rigault sat thinking uneasily as he smoothed the young head resting on his knee. The girl of seventeen kept her old caressing, childish ways with her adopted father. Her tears went to his heart.

'And then another thing, daddy,' she went on, 'is it—can it be right to spend one's life in making



fine clothes for which people pay a great deal more than they ought? There's a costume now in our show-room, a pattern dress from Paris, to be sure, but I could make it any day for four pounds, and it's marked fifteen guineas! It's all pomps and vanities, and nothing else! and all the time there's Polly Brown's husband lying ill, and Jem Wood out of work, and their families starving!'

This touched a chord in Rigault's heart which thrilled at once. An Englishman of his rank might have felt as strongly on the subject, but would scarcely have reasoned it out as had the Frenchman. 'Listen, little one,' he said,—they were speaking in his own language—'I have felt all that as I hope you never will, and once it seemed to me that all this civilisation and wealth put things so crooked that the only way to get them straight was to sweep it all away, and begin afresh, all men being equal and sharing alike. But it would not do. You cannot set wrong right by main force, and as long as one man has more brains and a stronger will than others he will lead them, make what laws you may. The only cure is to make men feel they are brothers, through Christ—and recognise the duties of brothers one to another.'

'But they won't, daddy!'

'Sweep your own steps, little one; that is the way to make others see that their own are dirty! It's not doing what you call pomps and vanities

when you put honest, good work into everything you make, and do your best to stop what is wrong around you. Did you not tell me there were several girls who told you they were glad that some one spoke up, though they were afraid to do it themselves? There are temptations everywhere, my dear; Sarah Ann can no doubt tell you that.'

'I know.—Yes, I do think it's nearly as hard for her in that great house as for me. Poor Sarah Ann! she's such a good girl, and daddy, she thought I should give her up, because she's a servant, and I'm a milliner;—I hope I'm not bad enough for that,' said Yvonne, flushing hotly, as she recollected how some of the 'young ladies' derided her plain servant-friend, and how she had to struggle with some reluctance to be seen by them walking with her on Sarah Ann's Sunday out. The recollection of this weakness humbled her wholesomely, and perhaps helped her to be charitable towards her companions, but she was scarcely enough on her guard against the great danger of growing used to the evil around her. She was very young, and, after all, the companionship of girls of her own age was very pleasant. While the evenings were short and dark Rigault always came to meet and take her home, but when spring brought sweet long twilights and lingering out-of-doors became tempting, she began to dislike this, and wish to linger on her way with her acquaint-

ances. Moreover, they laughed at her for 'being fetched home like a baby.'

'Daddy,' she once said, when he had come as usual to Mrs. Leeson's door, and for once no smile met him, 'I do wish you wouldn't trouble to come for me. It's light enough now, and I don't care to come in directly. If you'd been shut up all day in a workroom you'd know how it feels.'

'So I am—in mine—child. If you want a walk we will go in the lanes.'

'The lanes! I'm not a baby now; it's not that, but I wish you would not come,' she said, with pettishness such as he had never met from her before.

'I will not have you loitering in the streets,' he said sharply; and then there was silence between them, and that evening was not comfortable to either. Rigault sat reading, and Yvonne mended her clothes and pouted. But her kiss of good-night was penitent.

'I'm sorry I've been cross, daddy,' said she, coaxingly, 'but you see . . . I'm not a child now, and the girls do laugh at me so for being fetched.'

'No, not a child now, more's the pity. Good night, my girl.'

She went away, half angry at the ring of sadness in his voice, and when the next night came she almost wished he might be waiting for her. He was not there, however, and she hastened home rather troubled. His usual kind look welcomed her, and

nothing more passed between them on the subject. Somehow, however, she began to come in late; there was always some excuse, and her conscience pricked her, as did his silent but evident disapproval. She felt herself going wrong, was unhappy and vexed with herself, and troubled that a cloud should have come between them,—answered Mrs. Yeo's motherly warnings sharply, hurried over the prayers which as yet she did not dare omit, and told herself that she was not fit to go to Holy Communion.

Mrs. Yeo observed to Rigault with a shake of the head, 'I always said it was a mistake to put her into a shop—girls are safer in service.' She did not know what a pang her foreboding words gave him, or how helpless he felt as he saw the young, pretty, inexperienced girl slipping from his control.

But there was good stuff in Yvonne, and she had been well trained. The recoil came, and violently. As Rigault sat alone one evening, too sad to read, and asking himself how to deal with her, she came in, threw her bonnet on a chair, and hiding her face, broke into tears. It was some time before his anxious soothing gained an answer. 'Oh, daddy,' she sobbed, 'do you remember Lizzie? the girl I liked so much in Mrs. Summer's shop? I've not seen her these three months and more; I could not think what had become of her, but to-night . . .'

'Well?' Rigault guessed the story only too easily.

'I was walking in the High Street with Lotty Brown, and asked her, and she looked at me and laughed . . . I'll never speak to her again . . . she knew, I'm sure she did, and she *laughed*, daddy,' said Yvonne, lifting her eyes, all ablaze with righteous anger, while the tears fringed their lashes, and fell in large, bitter drops. 'But just then a friend of hers . . . a young man,'—she seemed to force out the words as if to punish herself—'came up, and began to talk, and wanted us to go to a public-house—me in a public-house! So I went off, though they were nasty about it . . . and near here I met Lizzie. . . . O daddy! she came up, looking I don't know how, and laughed out loud, and complimented me on having got my freedom, and being out at such an hour alone. I could not say a word, I was so taken aback, and then she stopped, and gripped my arm,—see there's the mark now—and asked me quite fierce, what I was about to be dawdling in the streets? did I want to be like her? And she turned on me and said if she'd had a home and a good father like mine there would have been a chance for her, and I ought to be ashamed to throw myself away . . . I don't know what I said, it was all so dreadful, only I got home, and she watched me all the way. O poor Lizzie, poor Lizzie! She's an orphan, and often

said there was no one who cared if she went right or wrong, and that first made me think about her.'

Yvonne's tears flowed fast. There was not only the feeling of deep compassion and dismay, but the consciousness that she herself had ventured with rash wilfulness among those pitfalls in which her friend had perished.

'I've been all wrong, daddy,' she said, in answer to his tender words. 'I know better now . . . you've been very patient, and I'm going to be a better girl. I'm sure there is no excuse for *me* if I don't keep straight. But oh, it *is* hard for a good many . . . some, who board out, like at Mrs. Summer's, have only their bedroom to sit in after hours, and it's dull. I wish we had a coffee-room, —not for myself,' she hastened to add, 'but I do think we want some place where girls could sit and be comfortable, and have tea and books, and maybe a piano. But no one thinks about shop girls!'

'Why don't they help themselves, my little one?' said Rigault, glad to turn her thoughts from poor lost Lizzie, for whom he felt mingled repulsion and gratitude—repulsion that she should have approached his innocent girl, and gratitude that she had tried to help her as far as she knew how.

'It is foolish to wait till others help us when we can do a thing ourselves. Why do the girls not join, and put part of their earnings together to pay

for this? And some of the owners of shops and others would doubtless assist if necessary.'

'I do not know—some have a room for them, and some, like Mrs. Leeson, are too grand to care about the girls.'

'It should be done by those who want it, not offered them by the rich, though they might help,' persisted Rigault. 'That empty warehouse in Market Street would do well enough, and as for a manager . . . why, I myself could undertake that, and no one makes better coffee than I in the town!'

With his national gift of planning and scheming Rigault already had the scheme almost mapped out. But Yvonne was too heavy at heart to smile, or even care for the project, though later it became very dear to her. The story of the St. Petrox coffee-room is however too long to tell here. She was still thinking of Lizzie.

'It was love of fine clothes that began it, I do believe,' she said. 'She got into debt for them, and made friends with bad girls. Daddy, no one knows what harm that wanting to dress smart gets girls into! Yes, that was how it all began.'

It might have been some eighteen months later that Yvonne startled Rigault by coming in almost as agitated as she had done on this night. Again—and for the first time since then—she had staid out late, and he looked up with grave inquiry in

his face as she entered. She cut his questions short by saying hurriedly, 'I'm late, but I could not help it—I've been sitting by the sea and forgot the time. Mrs. Leeson has dismissed me,' she added abruptly; 'but I've done nothing wrong, daddy.'

'I'm sure of that,' said Rigault, tenderly, and waited for what should follow, but she only said gratefully, 'Thank you, dear daddy,' and was silent. A suspicion of the truth came into his mind. He had noticed that of late the name of James Leeson had often been on her lips, though the only son of her employer, a clerk in the St. Petrox Union Bank, was supposed to know nothing of the girls in his mother's shop. Rigault had inquired quietly about him, found he was a highly respectable young fellow, and let the matter rest, though not easy about it.

'She'll give me the best of characters, and find me a situation in London, if I'll go there,' said Yvonne, suddenly. 'I suppose I must tell you about it, daddy.' But the words seemed hard to find, and, after all, the story was not to be told by her, for there was a knock, followed by the entrance of a young man with a pleasant face and manner, though both just then a good deal embarrassed. Evidently Yvonne had not expected him. She stood up, blushing rosy red. 'This is Mr. Leeson, father,' said she. Rigault turned his searching dark eyes on the visitor, who spoke to him, but looked

at Yvonne. 'I have only just heard from my mother . . .' he began, and so the tale came out.

It was simple enough. The two loved each other, though very little had passed between them, and mischief-makers had reported to Mrs. Leeson far more than there was to tell. Perhaps Yvonne had never faced her own feelings until taxed with them by Mrs. Leeson; and James had not intended to speak so soon, but both knew them now. He spoke in a manly, honest way which greatly pleased Rigault, who felt that he could trust his darling to this lover, if part with her he must, and, looking at Yvonne's sweet modest face, thought any man would be fortunate who could win her. 'I must think it over,' was all he said however, for the way was thorny.

He kept his word, for if Yvonne slept little that night he slept not at all, forgetting in fact to go to bed. It was passed in a struggle even harder than when he had watched by her in fever, and the traces of that struggle were so evident when she saw him, written in every line of his pale and tired countenance that she forgot her troubles for the moment and exclaimed, 'Daddy, how ill you look! Don't worry so. I won't go to London; I shall find work here, and I'll keep out of his way, and . . . and tell him he must not think any more of me!'

She misread Rigault's thoughts, but the words

came like balm. 'What! stay here and give him up?' he asked.

'I can't leave you, father! You have done everything for me, and, this is the first chance I've had of doing anything for you. I'll try, indeed—I won't fret—and it's best so,' she said, choking down a sob.

'We will see,' he answered, and later went off to encounter Mrs. Leeson. She was a woman over fifty, with a plain, anxious face, not unkind, but she received him very stiffly, which, after all, was natural enough, Rigault knew, and she gradually relaxed, and spoke kindly of Yvonne.

'What could I do? I don't say she has behaved ill, and I am sorry to lose her: it is a real loss to part with her, but—you see yourself,' she urged.

'It is needless to say that your son cannot marry against your wishes, madame; but do I gather that you only object because she is poor and nameless?' asked Rigault, without otherwise answering.

'Of course my son must marry into a good, respectable family, Mr. Rigault. It is not that I object to the girl herself, but she has not a penny, and he will have good means.'

'If my girl fancied a poor man whom I thought well of she should have him,—though she has some money, too,' said Rigault.

'She has money!' cried the milliner, surprised out of her rigid civility.

'Not much . . . 600l.,' said Rigault.

'But . . . excuse me, Mr. Rigault, I don't see how that can be.'

'I am not as poor as I seem, madame. Yvonne will have this sum on her marriage.'

'I'm sure I'm very glad . . . for her sake,' stammered Mrs. Leeson, so much astonished that she hardly knew what she said. 'You quite understand I have no unfriendly feeling towards Miss Rigault—quite the contrary.'

'Good morning, madame,' said Rigault, bowing, with politeness not lost on Mrs. Leeson—especially now that she knew he was only poor, so to say, from choice, and she even offered her hand. He went home with a smile, half humorous, half bitter. Young Leeson might have looked higher, but he was the only son of a fond mother, who, after all, would be glad to escape a contest with him.

'It would not surprise me if you had good news soon,' Rigault answered to Yvonne's pleading eyes when he returned. She guessed where he had been. And a day or two later the young clerk hurried in radiant, bringing his mother's consent.

'O daddy!' was Yvonne's exclamation, 'how have you done this? I know it is your doing!'

'I would as soon have her without a penny, Mr. Rigault,' said the young man earnestly. 'It is only because of my mother that I care a straw.'

He meant it ; Rigault saw that he did, and gave him a friendly nod.

‘ But what have I ? ’ asked Yvonne, as much surprised as the milliner had been, and then Rigault had to explain.

‘ I tell you the story, children, ’ he said reluctantly, ‘ but never speak of it to me or others again. I had a foster-brother . . . in this country you think little of that tie, but with us in my Languedoc it counts as blood. This young man was mixed up in a plot against the traitor Louis Napoleon ’—a dark, vindictive look crossed Rigault’s face. ‘ This new Emperor had sworn to the nation to be their first magistrate and no more, and mowed down our citizens with cannon when they resisted his treachery. Some of us in Paris did not like this, my foster-brother for one. He joined in a conspiracy, was denounced ; I got wind of it. I was a railway guard, and smuggled him away dressed as a woman . . . and a very pretty one he made, ’ Rigault added, with a bitter laugh. ‘ What I did was found out, thanks to a comrade who coveted my post—and got it—it was by a miracle of luck I escaped to England. There I found young Edmond in London, as poor as a rat, and not at all too proud to let me work for him, though he was a gentleman and I a plebeian. His family thought him a good riddance, but a few months later a cousin died, and he became sole heir. That made a difference.

They got his offences overlooked—few knew of them. He went home . . . and serves Napoleon !'

It is impossible to describe the accent of contempt and disdain with which Rigault spoke. Neither of his listeners ventured to ask anything, but he continued—'For me, naturally, no one asked a pardon. It was better that a republican—a democrat—and one who knew the young man's past should remain in exile. To make sure—and show their gratitude—they wrote to say that as long as I stayed in England a pension of 1000 francs, 40*l.* in English money—should be paid me yearly. They are generous, you see !'

'And you never touched it ! not even when you were almost starving,' Yvonne murmured.

'Touched it !' exclaimed Rigault, fiercely, 'bread bought with that traitor's money would have choked me ! It was easier to starve.'

'But . . . O father ! I know now how my going to Coscombe was paid for !' cried Yvonne, with tears in her eyes, as she realised something of what it must have cost to use this money for her.

He made no answer. 'My father was a basket-maker,' he went on, 'and I learnt the trade in my youth. I came here—and I found you, little one.'

The story was told. Rigault saw nothing remarkable in it, but young Leeson held out his hand, and shook Rigault's warmly. 'You know, sir, our

home must be yours,' he said earnestly. 'It is thanks to you we shall have one to offer.'

'Poor daddy! I wish the money had come some other way,' said Yvonne, softly, laying her cheek to his.

- Rigault shook his finger at her. 'Little rogue,' he said, smiling, 'you know you are too happy to care how it comes!'

And so she was.

LUCY GRANT;
OR,
LEARNING TO BE USEFUL.


By C. M. KING.

CHAPTER I.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

IN one of the southern counties of England is a little country town which we will call Newlands. About a quarter of a mile outside it, on the London road, there is a turning on the right-hand side which leads to a wide lane, and at the end of this lane stands a hamlet—almost a village. The houses look comfortable and cared for ; there is a green, on which children may be found, on a summer's morning, busy at games of all sorts. The little ones are obliged to give way sometimes, when the bigger boys settle to have cricket, but they generally

find a corner just as convenient for playing at marbles and spinning-tops. Not far off stands a church, which serves for the hamlet and for the numerous houses scattered around. The whole of this, which may be called a parish in itself, has grown up within the last few years ; and though it is in reality a sort of suburb, it is sufficiently far off to consider itself entitled to all the charms and privileges of a country village, while it shares the comforts and conveniences of its parent town. It had taken to itself the name of Beechwood—nobody knew exactly when or how ; but there are three or four magnificent beech-trees near the church, which (so runs the story) were on the point of being cut down and the ground on which they stood sold for building, when one fine day a gentleman and lady were riding by, and stopped to admire them. The owner, who was present, announced his intention of cutting and selling, to the horror of the strangers, who there and then made some sort of bargain with the man—nobody knew exactly what, but no doubt it was satisfactory in a pecuniary point of view, for the trees were spared and carefully fenced round, and it was the general opinion that the gentleman had bought them. This transaction no doubt gave rise to the name of the village, and though the first owner pretended that the inhabitants owed much to his generosity in sparing such an ornament to the place, they all knew better, and



expended their gratitude upon their unknown benefactor.

About half-way down the lane leading from Newlands to Beechwood there is a stile. Climb over it, and you will find yourself immediately in some very pleasant fields. A path through them takes you at once into the town, by a much shorter and less dusty way than the highroad. These fields are bright and sunny, and in the spring, when the buttercups are in bloom, they look as though they were laughing for very joy as you go through them. Moreover, it is a pleasant variety from the shade of the lane, where on one side there is a steep bank, with large old trees and pollards. Some of them are so old that their roots are nearly out of the ground, and in stormy weather you might hear fears expressed lest some luckless passenger should be killed by the fall of one of these giants. But I have never known such a disaster really take place, and can bear testimony to the extreme beauty of the overhanging branches, and to the luxuriance of ferns and flowers that every year enjoy their life upon this shady bank. Even in winter it is pleasant here, for there is much to admire in the grand old stems and the network of branches overhead, though the fallen leaves are lying brown and crisp beneath your feet; not to speak of the snowy days, when every separate twig has its own special wreath of pure and spotless white.

But we have not to do with winter now. It was on a July afternoon, very sultry, and almost cloudy, that a lady was returning by way of the lane to her own home in the town. She had been visiting at Beechwood, amongst poor and rich, and was taking it very quietly, thinking of all she had been hearing. When she reached the stile there was some one sitting there ; so she drew back for a moment, but soon perceived the figure was one she knew well.

‘Oh, it’s Lucy Grant,’ she said ; and Lucy had jumped down in a moment, and was hoping to get off with simply making her courtesy to the lady ; but Mrs. Pomeroy had always some kind word for the village girls, and stopped her, saying,—

‘Are you on your way home, Lucy ? I dare say you wanted a rest this hot afternoon. Have you been into the town ?’

It is the last drop that makes the cup overflow, and poor Lucy, who, if she could have reached home without anyone speaking to her might have kept back her tears, was fairly ‘done,’ and instead of answering burst into a fit of crying.

Mrs. Pomeroy stood aghast.

‘What is the matter, Lucy ? What can have happened to make you so unhappy ?’

Lucy tried to speak, but only cried the more ; and Mrs. Pomeroy, seeing she should get no explanation at present, said, gently,—

‘Never mind ; I dare say you’d rather tell me by-

and-by. I shall be at home this evening, and if you'd like to come and talk to me after tea, you can. Ask your mother if she can spare you ; and if not, some other time will do.'

So Lucy, with a courtesy of most grateful thanks, went up the lane, vexed enough that she had given way ; for she knew her swollen eyes would tell tales when she got home. But it was done now, and she must make the best of it.

Mrs. Pomeroy pursued her quiet walk across the fields, wondering what distress could have overtaken the usually bright and happy Lucy Grant. Her house was almost in the middle of the principal street of Newlands : a regular, old-fashioned, red-brick town-house, with a black door, and not very large windows placed exactly over each other, and white margins round them all. But when once you were inside, and the front door was shut behind you, you never thought about the town again ; for you might have been a hundred miles away for aught anything you saw would have reminded you of it. The sitting-room, which had been built out behind, looked upon the terrace and garden. Oh, such a garden ! I could almost write a book about each separate bed of flowers ; for each had its special charm, and history, and place, in the heart of those who tended it lovingly and carefully all the summer through. There were large trees scattered about, under which you could sit for many a plea-

sant hour, quite sheltered from the scorching sun ; and it was beneath one of these that Lucy Grant found Mrs. Pomeroy, when she came in the evening to explain the scene which had occurred earlier in the day. It was no new thing for the village girls—ah, and for older people, too !—to pour the story of their troubles into Mrs. Pomeroy's willing and attentive ear. Not that she said anything very particular or different from what others might have said, but she had the rare faculty of *listening*, and never made them feel that she was bored, however tedious the tale. She bade Lucy sit down beside her, and then she heard the history of her grief.

It happened that a few nights before, as Lucy was going upstairs, she overheard her father say,—

‘ I fear Lucy will never be a useful girl, like the other two. She can't do a hand's turn for herself, much less for other people. I hope she won't be a fine lady.’

He did not mean it unkindly, for John Grant was very fond of his children, and if there was a favourite among the three girls it was Lucy.

Mrs. Grant instantly took her part, and answered him rather quickly :—

‘ Oh, John ! it's wrong of you to talk so. You know the girl's had no chance. That illness she had long ago quite prevented her doing anything, and the other two always got before her. Now they're married it will be different, and we'll get

her a place some day, and you'll soon see what she'll do !'

Lucy never said, when she came down again, that she had heard all this, which certainly was never intended for her ears; but it stung her to the quick, and for weeks it made her miserable. So when her mother said at dinner, the day before Mrs. Pomeroy met her, that Mrs. Simpson wanted a girl to help in the house, she quietly asked if she might try for the place, and both father and mother gave their consent. The next afternoon Lucy put on her things and went off to Newlands. With a beating heart she rang the bell at Mrs. Simpson's door, and said what she was come for. She was immediately taken up to the mistress of the house, who spoke rather loudly and roughly.

'Now, I want a girl who can make herself useful in any way, so I hope you don't want to be *taught*, for I've had half-a-dozen here this morning of that sort, and it won't do for me. Now, what can you do? Can you scrub floors, and clean grates, and help in the cooking if I want it, and do a good bit of needlework now and then?'

Lucy answered very timidly that she thought she could manage the sewing, but she had never done the other things, though she would try hard to give satisfaction.

'Then,' said Mrs. Simpson, 'you may as well go home at once—you're not my sort. I'm not going

to spend my time teaching servants their work. I might as well keep a school ! Learn your work at home, and then look for a place.'

So Lucy was dismissed without even a kind word or look from this rough woman. It was on her way back to Beechwood that Mrs. Pomeroy met her, sitting on the stile, utterly downcast, feeling that perhaps her father's words were true after all, and she never would be useful, like her sisters, for, now that she had been put to the test, she really didn't know how to do anything. Still, if Mrs. Simpson would only have let her *try* . . . but perhaps she would have failed, and that would have been worse. She must go home, and feel that she was a burden rather than a help to any one. Such were her thoughts when Mrs. Pomeroy's question put the finishing stroke to her troubles ; and now, what was she to do ?

Mrs. Pomeroy heard the whole story, very much relieved in her own mind that there was nothing worse, and then said,—

' This has been a disappointment, Lucy, but one from which I hope you may get good and not harm. It will teach you how little you know, which is always the first step in learning ; and you have only to begin at once in real earnest, and you will soon be able to do as much as any other girl of your age. You are only sixteen, and have plenty of time before you, if God gives you health and

strength. If your father and mother would like it, you shall come to my house for a time, where you shall learn many little things to make you generally useful. Nobody can do things right at once, and if only you take pains and do your best I shall be satisfied.'

Lucy could have cried for joy this time, but she managed to control herself, and, with a heart fuller of gratitude to Mrs. Pomeroy than she was able to express, ran home, wondering at the change that so short a time had made in her feelings and prospects. She had actually in one day seen something of the ups and downs of life ! Ah ! and how happy that the day had ended with the *climbing* steps !

All was soon settled at home, and Lucy was installed in her own place in Mrs. Pomeroy's house, which was really no particular place, for she was here, and there, and everywhere, just doing whatever was wanted. She learnt very quickly, as most people do with a light heart and good health ; and Mrs. Pomeroy was overheard to say before long that she feared her servants would be spoilt, Lucy did so much for them all !

CHAPTER II.

COMPENSATION.

‘FATHER ! father ! look what I have brought you ! A letter from Harry ! The postman has just given it to me.’

With this good news Lucy rushed almost breathless into her own home one fine October afternoon. She hardly expected to find her father in, for he was a carpenter, and generally stayed later than this at his workshop. It was no small pleasure to think she could hear the contents of the letter at once, for Mrs. Pomeroy had charged her to be back again before it grew dusk, and she could not have waited until his usual hour for returning. She put the letter into his hand, looking radiant, but felt as though a cold, damp wind had blown across her forehead when he said, as he took it,—

‘I hope it’s all right.’

‘All right, father ! of course it’s all right !’ she replied. ‘It’s always all right with Harry.’

Ah ! with what trustful certainty we take our joys in youth ! I love to see it. It is like a gleam from the far-off land, where there *is* the sunshine without the shadow, the rose without the thorn, the bud without the canker-worm. But it cannot last. As life goes on we still receive from our

Father's love all the happiness. He gives us thankfully and often eagerly, but the hand trembles while it holds the treasure, for the heart is deeply conscious that often when the sky is brightest the storm is hard at hand.

Lucy's determination that all should be right made her father smile as he took the letter out of the envelope, but he had not read far before a very different expression came over his face. He looked very grave, and to Lucy's question, 'What's the matter, father?' he quietly answered, 'Harry is ill—we must have him home;' and left the room to find Mrs. Grant.

So it was not 'all right;' and Lucy, when she was left alone, conjured up a variety of things that might have happened to Harry, wondering which would turn out to be the true one: but her father and mother soon set her mind at rest, by bringing her the letter to read for herself. From it she gathered that her brother, who was clerk at a railway-station about sixty miles off, had been unwell for some time, and was gradually getting worse. The doctor feared rheumatic fever, and said the only thing to be done was to send him home immediately, where he must have warmth and good nursing. He added that 'it was with difficulty he wrote the letter, but he hoped to be with them by the end of the week.' Happily for Lucy, she had no idea how terrible an illness rheumatic fever

is in itself, and often in its consequences ; and the prospect of seeing her brother was so delightful that she, even now, did not wholly retract her idea that it would be 'all right with Harry.' As her father walked back with her into the town, she could only think and speak of the pleasure of 'nursing him till he was well.'

'God grant he *may* get well !' John Grant said, sadly ; but he feared for his boy, his only son, and the pride of his heart.

That evening Lucy did not see Mrs. Pomeroy, so she was not able to communicate the intelligence which so filled her mind that she got very little sleep ; but the next morning she told the whole story to her kind friend, who of course saw that her services would be wanted at home, and went over in the course of the day to make arrangements with her mother. Had anything short of her brother's return called her away, Lucy would have sorely grieved to leave Mrs. Pomeroy ; but this made up for all, and she was very grateful for what she had been taught. She was not without her faults—a quick temper and want of patience often got her into trouble, but she was trying to mend in both these respects, and hoped they would find her improved at home. She did not know then, poor child ! how often her patience would be tried in such an illness as Harry's.

The day before he was expected she was settled

again with her father and mother, and they soon saw that she had not left them for nothing. Her busy fingers were at work everywhere, cleaning and arranging, so that her mother said,—

‘Lucy, you will leave nothing for me to do if you go on like this!’

And her father, little knowing how his words would touch her, observed, with a smile,—

‘Why, Lucy, you *are* grown into a useful little woman!’

‘Ah, father!’ she said, but she could go no further, for the quick tears came and choked her; by-and-by she told him all that his former speech had cost her. It was his turn to be sorry now that he had, all unconsciously, grieved the child he loved so dearly; but she assured him that nothing but good had come of it, and his last words had more than made up for anything she had suffered.

‘If you had never said what you did, I should have been quite unfit to help you now,’ she added; and with her arms around her father’s neck, and a loving kiss, the cloud was soon dispersed, and all was as bright as ever.

Harry’s arrival left little room or time for any thoughts but of him. The journey, though a short one, had been almost more than he could bear; and when, aching and feverish, he was laid in his bed they saw plainly that it would be many weeks before he would leave it. The doctor pronounced

it a decided case of rheumatic fever, and said the utmost care and attentive nursing would be requisite.

Now was the time for Lucy to rise to the emergency, and to reap the advantage of what she had been learning at Mrs. Pomeroy's. And, in truth, she did so. Harry, who was irritable through pain and fever, thought no hands so tender, no step so quiet, no finger so clever as hers—not even his mother's, whom he had always considered the best nurse in England ! Perhaps it was the activity and lightness of extreme youth in all her movements that suited him so well in an illness where the dread of being touched is often great. It was long before the crisis came, and till then they were afraid to think which turn things might take ; but after weeks of anxiety and distress the doctor said there was decidedly a change for the better, and they might hope now. They did hope, tremblingly but thankfully, and, with the bright prospect of Harry's recovery before them, looked on to the coming Christmas. The fear lest Lucy might be overdone often came across the mind of both father and mother, for the invalid required constant attendance by day and night. They would not allow her to do more than take her turn with others in the night-watching, and the married daughters would often come over and help. Harry belonged to a club, from which he received a good sum every week, and his father's trade was a thriving one, so they

had not to contend with poverty as well as illness. Moreover, Mrs. Pomeroy was always a 'friend in need ;' and Mr. Neville, the Rector of Beechwood, had given directions that they should apply to him for anything that was wanted.

During the paroxysms of fever Harry's mind would wander sadly, and at such times Lucy could never bear to be with him alone. If it came on at night she would call her father, and when the fit was over the poor boy would lie thoroughly exhausted, and weak and helpless as a baby. Then she would appear again as a ministering angel, sitting by his side and whispering soft and pleasant words into his ear, and sometimes the tired sufferer would sink off into a short doze. When he got a little better, and could sleep longer, Lucy had much time for thought, and life and all connected with it seemed to wear a new aspect for her. She had often heard and read of people being very ill—ah ! and of their dying, too !—but she never understood it till now. What if Harry had died ? What if she herself were to get ill and die ? where would she find herself ? Over and over again these questions, and many more like them, forced themselves upon the girl's mind in the stillness of those night-watchings, and it was then she learnt to pray. Not to *say her prayers*, for she had done that from the time she could speak, but to *pray*—to ask with all the longing of a troubled spirit for what she

wanted ; to cry from the depths of a sorely-stricken heart to One who could hear and help her. It was for Harry she prayed, that this sickness might indeed be 'not unto death,' that the life so dear to them all might be given back again. And while watching in this 'border-land,' even while she prayed for him, she was taught to ask for 'greater things than these ;' she was taught to see in this illness an emblem of that 'soul-sickness' which none but the Great Physician can cure, and that this remedy was needed for herself as well as for her brother. So she 'cried, and the Lord heard her ;' she was 'in misery, and He helped her.' Gently, step by step, He led her on, and drew her to Himself by the cords of love. Her burden was laid down at her Saviour's feet, and instead of it she took His easy yoke, and found it light to bear.

Harry would often be sent to sleep by a few minutes of quiet reading, and Lucy would choose verses which told of Him who 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' Over and over again she would read of the Shepherd going after the sheep which was lost *until* He found it, and Harry never seemed to tire of this. By degrees she had read to him most of the passages in the blessed Saviour's life, from the cradle to the grave ; and there were times when it seemed as though the Love of which she was reading was indeed over-shadow-
ing them ; as though they were some of the sheep

which He had found in the wilderness, and over whom He would rejoice. Harry was not one to say much, but his sister could see the smile on his face while hearing of 'the prodigal son,' or 'the woman which was a sinner,' and this would encourage her to go on.

It was marvellous to observe how patient and quiet he became, how thankful for all they did for him, and how much less irritable than formerly. His father and mother hailed it as a sign that he suffered less, which, of course, was the case ; but Lucy thought a deeper secret still lay beneath this truth, though she said nothing, but thanked God in her heart.

So the Christmas morning came, and there was sunshine within and without for that little household. Lucy went with her father to church, while her mother stayed with Harry, who was so far recovered that he could be left by himself, if only someone were within call. It was a brighter Christmas Day for Lucy than she had ever spent before, and when the joyous notes of the Christmas hymn burst forth she hardly knew how to bear it. She almost thought it must be the very angels themselves that were singing 'Glory to the new-born King,' it sounded so beautiful.

Ah ! if only our hearts were in better tune, how often we should catch some echoes of the songs of heaven, which, after all, are not so very far away !

Lucy remained with her father for the Holy Communion. She had several times before received it, but never with the thoughts that now filled her soul. The remembrance of her own exceeding sinfulness would have kept her back but for the still greater love which called to her, 'Come unto Me ;' and, trusting in that love, she went, and 'found rest unto her soul.' 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift !' was in her heart, and almost on her lips, through the rest of the day. The only thing wanting was that Harry should have been with her ; but she would look forward in hopes to the spring and summer, when, perhaps, they might go together ; and so, as the days grew longer, all became brighter, till the suffering and anxiety they had gone through seemed almost like a dream of the past.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE WING.

'I.o, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.' Never were these words

more applicable than to the spring after Harry Grant's illness. It was a lovely season, and with the fresh young life that burst forth in all nature there seemed to come restored life to him. True, the doctor had said privately to Mr. Neville that he feared mischief about the heart ; but he was considered a *croaker*, and while they saw the young man improving every day no one cared to look on into the future. When Easter came, Lucy had her earnest desire fulfilled, for Harry and she were together at the Holy Communion. It was a blessed day for both. Harry was drawn into church in his chair—for he could not yet walk—and Lucy was by his side. In the public thanksgiving he had returned thanks for his recovery, and in the higher song of praise at the end of the Communion Service it was for still greater mercies that they both joined in giving glory to God.

Their hearts were very full as they went home, and they said but little. All nature was in tune with their thanksgiving service ; the very birds seemed to be singing the joyous hymn, 'Jesus Christ is risen to-day;' and the flowers opened their sweet petals wider to the beauty of the Easter sunshine. But when 'the spirit is willing the flesh is' often 'weak,' and to one in Harry's state even happiness is tiring. So he had to rest all the afternoon, and while his father and mother were at church Lucy remained at home. She sat very

quietly, afraid of disturbing the sleep into which her brother had fallen, and her own thoughts were quite enough for her. She gathered up all the events of the last few months, and, oh, how much had happened ! She recollected when she had said so confidently, 'It's always all right with Harry.' It *was* 'all right' with him *now*, she could humbly hope, for she felt sure he was much changed since his illness. Not that he had ever been a wild or vicious boy, but she knew he felt differently from what he had ever done before. And then as to herself . . . But just as she was beginning to trace her own little history Harry awoke and called her.

As the spring advanced there were few days on which Harry did not get into the open air. When his father had the time, he would draw him in his chair to some warm, sunny spot, where they would pause, and then Lucy would bring her work and sit with them. On one especially lovely May morning Harry asked to be taken down the lane which we described at the beginning of our story. When they reached the stile leading into the fields John Grant proposed to leave them for a little while, as he had some business to see to. 'I will come back again to draw Harry home,' he said to Lucy. So the brother and sister were left to spend a happy hour together. They would have made a pretty picture, had anyone been there to draw it. Harry in his chair, with the warm crimson woollen

wrap given him by Mrs. Pomeroy covering his knees; Lucy mounted on the top of the stile (it's not the first time we have seen her there), swinging her hat in her hand, while the soft breezes fanned her brow and tossed her golden hair. Overhead the sunlight was flickering through the branches, as yet only half-clothed in their summer dress, and for a background there were fields and woods beyond. Suddenly a lark rose not very far from where they were sitting, and with a carol of exulting joy soared up into the blue above them.

'Harry, do look at that lark!' said Lucy. 'Was there ever such a happy bird? Its little throat is swelling so! it sings louder and louder as it gets higher. I can see it still—do look, Harry!'

'Yes,' said Harry, as he looked up after the bird; 'it's like a spirit on its way from earth to heaven. Ah! it's out of sight now, Lucy.'

She wished he hadn't said it (yet why should he not?) and turned to find something that might divert his attention—and her own, too. All at once she spied a bed of hyacinths in the middle of the field.

'Harry, I'm going to get you some hyacinths!'

And before he could answer she was off, and had plunged, nearly to her knees, in a perfect sea of bluebells. She filled her apron and her hat. Still that lark would sing, and it seemed hovering over her, though it was too high for her to see.

‘ All the earth and air
With its voice were loud.’

Well, she would go back now, and Harry would help her to make up the flowers into nosegays.

‘ Now, Harry, look what I’ve got ! Did you ever see such magnificent hyacinths ? ’

But Harry did not answer.

‘ Harry, do look ! ’

As she came closer she started.

‘ Harry ! Harry ! speak !—do speak to me ! Oh, Harry ! what is it ? what has happened ? Do—do tell me ! ’

The lips were parted, and the head had fallen a little on one side—that was all ; otherwise he was just as she had left him.

Poor, poor Lucy ! what have you to learn, as you bend over the chair, and take first one hand and then the other, and remove his hat, to let the cool air blow upon his forehead ? No, it’s not a faint, though you try to think so : it’s just this,—

‘ He knew the music went that way
His soul would have to go.’

And while you were gathering for him the flowers of earth, he went up after the skylark ; yes, and higher still, to join in the songs of Heaven.

But Lucy could not and would not believe it. She was almost stunned, and would have fallen on the carpet of bluebells she had flung upon the

ground, only that at that instant she saw her father coming up the lane ; this revived her a little, and she tried to run towards him, but her limbs seemed paralysed. She got up to him somehow, and gasped out, 'Oh ! Harry, Harry !' and then she fell at his feet.

'What's the matter ? what's up now ?' said John Grant, cheerily enough at first, for he thought Lucy was at some game ; but the almost convulsive sobs of the girl frightened him, and he dragged her on till they reached the chair. She told him nothing, but he saw, and he knew—ah ! too well he knew, for it was not the first time that *he* had seen death come without a warning.

What was to be done ? Nothing. There was the misery. The three were there alone—no, not the three, only two now—and they were powerless. 'The spirit had returned to God who gave it,' and the lifeless form, not yet cold, was all that was left with them.

Surely, surely, it must be an evil dream ! How long they would have remained there, dazed and stupefied, none ever knew, had not some passer-by observed them, and by degrees made out the sad history. Then others gathered round, and they were taken home.

Then the poor mother had to be told, for she was at home, expecting them all to come in at dinner-time. Happily, hers was one of those ex-

tremely passive natures which seem incapable of receiving a shock ; and her gentle spirit, though sorely bruised and torn, yielded to the sorrow which only gradually it came to realise.

Friends gathered round the bereaved parents and sister ; the kind Rector was soon with them, and said he should have much to tell them by-and-by, when they were able to bear it, that would comfort them, for he had seen a great deal of Harry during the last few months, and had good hope that he was well prepared for so sudden a summons. The doctor was not surprised. He thought the end would be sudden, and he was thankful it was so painless. No care could have warded it off, as the heart had been diseased ever since that illness. The father seemed the most inconsolable of all ; and this was well for Lucy, who was soon to be found comforting him, whereby the pain of her own deep wound became assuaged.

There was another terrible day to be gone through, but God helped them. The birds sang loud and high all through the funeral service, as though there were no such thing as grief in earth or heaven. Lucy had not yet been able to tell the story of that skylark in the field, but when she heard the sound again she felt as if her heart, too, must give way. It was long before she could see or hear a lark without a shiver.

Her father and her mother were her one object now, and truly they needed her. John Grant was sadly broken down ; his mourning for his only son was long and bitter : indeed he never seemed the same man again. Lucy and he would talk over past times, and he reminded her once of the day when he received that letter, and when he had a sort of feeling, he didn't know why, that trouble was in store for them. Lucy looked up through her tears,—

‘Ah, father ! it *is always* all right with Harry *now.*’

It was hard to say it, but she did.

CHAPTER IV.

LEFT BEHIND.

THE solemn event which had happened in John Grant's family threw a gloom over the whole of Beechwood. The hush and stillness which sometimes precede death, in this case came after it. People would lower their voices as they neared the house, and even children would suppress their laughter and tread lightly as they passed the door, knowing that there were sad hearts within. Harry

had been so lately a playfellow among them (he was only twenty-one the week before he died) that many hardly understood yet what it all meant.

Before long, John Grant was to be found at his work as usual, but he looked twenty years older. His hair grew white, and he had the tottering step of an old man. There were moments when, like Jacob of old, he refused to be comforted ; and Lucy dreaded lest, as time went on, he should grow reserved and take it hardly.

‘Men’s grief is so different from ours,’ she said to herself ; ‘and mother’s gentle sorrow is scarcely in sympathy with the silent despair of his troubled spirit.’

She and he had received the shock, and they alone could know what each had gone through. There would come days when, but for him, Lucy would have felt, or have been inclined to feel, ‘Oh ! why had she been left behind ? Why had not both their spirits soared together on that sweet May morning ?’ But there was work for her to do, and she knew it—*home* work first, not always the easiest, but the best. She sought the needed strength for it from above, and it was given to her. Each day had its duties to be fulfilled, its cares to be borne, its difficulties to be lessened. Her old friend, Mrs. Pomeroy, was always ready to be consulted ; she went oftener to the cottage now, for she thought Lucy would shrink from coming through that lane,

and across those fields : her father was obliged to go constantly, but she had never ventured there since the day of Harry's death. It would long have been an untrodden path for her, but for a rumour which reached them one morning that a servant of Mrs. Pomeroy's was ill.

Mrs. Grant said to Lucy,—

‘I think you ought to go and see if you could be of any use ; she has been so kind to us, and I can get on very well for a few hours.’

So Lucy went. There was one way to the town by which she could have avoided the lane and fields, but it was a long way round, and she thought it better to do at once what must be done some day. At every step she took she felt a stab at her heart, and when she reached the stile—was it all going to happen over again?—Ah, no !—not all ; for one of them ‘the former things had passed away,’ and she alone could suffer now. At the recollection of this she knelt down among the long grass and ferns, and thanked God. Then she grew strong, and went on her way.

She was gladly welcomed at Mrs. Pomeroy's. The bright, high-spirited girl had become very quiet since the days when she first learnt in that house to be ‘of use ;’ but she was none the less active now, and for her chastened look and silent step they only loved her the more.

* * * * *

It is a long time now since I have heard of Lucy Grant. I know that about a year and a half after her brother's death she went abroad with Lady F——, a daughter of Mrs. Pomeroy's, who was left a widow with two little girls, and was in very delicate health. She wanted to take someone with her who would be kind and helpful, and would attend to the children. Her mother said,—

‘Who could do so well as Lucy Grant, if only she can be spared?’

She *was* spared, for they thought the change would be good for her, and of course she couldn't always remain at home. She may be with Lady F—— still, or she may have married, and have found new happiness and fresh cares in a home of her own. I always think of her as humbly ‘endeavouring to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life’ who said of Himself, ‘The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.’

Dear readers, will you ‘go and do likewise?’

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS.


By MRS. A. PHILLIMORE.

CERTAINLY the prettiest cottage in Ferncote village was the lodge which stood at the entrance to Squire Arden's park. It was an ornamental building, to begin with, and covered with creepers; and then its windows were so bright, and the curtains and blinds looked so clean within, and the garden without was so well tended, with its rows of vegetables and its gay flower-borders, that everyone who passed by admired it.

John Benham, the Squire's head keeper, who lived in it, was a steady, respectable man, and his wife was an active, bustling woman, who enjoyed work, and who could never bear to see dust, or dirt, or cobwebs, in her house, or a weed in her garden. Perhaps, if she had had a large family, it might have been difficult to keep the place so clean; but she had only three daughters, and the

eldest, who was as brisk and tidy as herself, had gone early to service, and after a few years had married a coachman, and was settled at some distance from her home : so only the two younger ones remained. It would have been well if Anne and Ellen had also gone to service, for they were not wanted at home, their mother choosing to do all the work herself ; but, as little children, they had not been very strong, which gave Mrs. Benham an excuse for indulging them ; and as, later, when they became confirmed in their indolence and idleness, though their health no longer gave a pretext for it, their mother found them rather a hindrance than a help, it came to this, that the mother did all the housework while the daughters lay late in bed, and when they did get up amused themselves with fancy-work and reading story-books.

Of course, as long as they attended the village school they could not indulge themselves in this way, but still they were almost always late, and so lost the good marks to which their reading, writing, and arithmetic, would have entitled them. At the age of thirteen Anne left school, and Ellen, though more than a year younger, refused to go there without her, and Mrs. Benham was weak enough to indulge her, in spite of her husband's opposition, and, in truth, against her own better judgment. In the same way, a year or two after, she upheld Anne in her refusal to go to service, and so the two girls



remained at home ; and if we cannot say they were doing harm, they were certainly doing no good, for their evil habits of self-indulgence were growing upon them, and left no room for any thought for others.

‘You see, ma’am,’ their mother said one day, when the Squire’s wife, Mrs. Arden, was remonstrating with her on the subject, ‘I like them to be happy while they can ; troubles will come quite fast enough.’

‘But how will they be able to meet trouble when it does come, if you only teach them to think of themselves and their own comfort ? And, really, I don’t think they are the happier for it. They neither of them look as bright and cheerful as their sister Mary did, and yet her first place was a harder one than either of those that have been offered to them.’

‘Yes, ma’am, that’s very true, but then Mary was always a girl for work. She was a very good girl always, but never so genteel as her sisters.’

‘I am afraid *genteel* is only another word for *useless*,’ said Mrs. Arden, gravely. ‘Suppose you were to fall ill, who would be fit to nurse you and look after Benham’s comfort ?’

‘Oh, ma’am, I’m strong and healthy, thank God, and I would rather do the work myself than make them slave.’

‘Of course you can do it much better than they

can ; but still, Mrs. Benham, it is a cruel kindness to spare them from work that they must do sooner or later. If they marry some day, what sort of wives and mothers will they make ?’

‘ Well, ma’am, they are young to think of that yet.’

‘ Not too young to be trained. And if a girl won’t work for her parents, I don’t think she is likely to make a happy home for her husband. Here is Mr. Ashton,’ as the Rector appeared at the door ; ‘ I am sure he will tell you the same thing.’

‘ Were you speaking about Anne and Ellen ?’ inquired Mr. Ashton, as he shook hands with Mrs. Arden. ‘ It is about them that I have called now. Our Sunday-school has increased so much lately, and, as you know, Miss Rhodes is going on a holiday, so that I want two more teachers, and it has occurred to me that, perhaps, they would each take a class. It would be a help in their preparation for Confirmation, as they would have to study the Catechism carefully. Do you think you could spare them, Mrs. Benham ?’

Mrs. Benham would not take it upon herself to answer, though anxious to please her clergyman ; so the two girls were summoned, and came in yawning and listless, one from a novel (for, unluckily, there was a cheap circulating library in the neighbouring town), and the other from her end-

less crocheting of useless anti-macassars ; and while Mr. Ashton explained his idea, Mrs. Arden looked disapprovingly at their frissetted heads and over-trimmed dresses.

Rather to everyone's surprise, Anne was taken with the novelty of the thing, for her time often hung heavily on her hands, so she agreed to go, and Ellen followed her lead ; and they even promised to be at the school in good time on Sunday morning, in answer to Mr. Ashton's lecture on punctuality.

'I am quite pleased to have found an occupation for those girls,' said the Rector, as he and Mrs. Arden left the lodge.

'If you have,' she replied, doubtfully. 'My own expectation is, that they will be punctual for a Sunday or so, and then-relapse into their old ways. How a sensible woman like Mrs. Benham can have brought them up so I cannot think, and now they will never mend unless a sharp lesson brings them to their senses.'

Mrs. Arden was right, and so the Rector had to own in the course of a very few weeks. The two Benham girls appeared later and later each Sunday, and their classes had to be taken by girls of the first class, till at last Mr. Ashton was glad to profit by Miss Rhodes' return and to decline their further services.

'Here's a letter for you, mother,' said Benham

to his wife one morning, as he came in to breakfast ; for Ferncote, having a station of its own, got its letters early.

‘From Jenny,’ said Mrs. Benham, as she recognised her sister’s writing. ‘Oh, dear ! this is bad news, John. Poor mother has got bronchitis, and the doctor doesn’t think she’ll get over it !’ And she read out the letter, which ended with a hope that she would come as soon as possible, if she wished to see her mother alive.

‘I must go at once, John. Poor, dear mother ! There’s no train before the ten o’clock, is there ?’

‘No : it’s the only morning train that stops at Dingley ; so you will have time to get your breakfast and put up a few things—for, of course, you’ll stay the night if you’re wanted.’

Poor Mrs. Benham was quite upset by this bad news, and could hardly eat anything, and soon left the table, saying she must get through her work before she went.

‘Nonsense !’ said her husband ; ‘let those lazy girls do it—it will do them good. It is too bad that they aren’t down yet. Here—Anne ! Ellen !’ he called impatiently up the stairs, ‘if you don’t come at once you’ll get no breakfast !’

Presently Ellen appeared, with her dress huddled on and her hair in a net, and evidently unbrushed.

‘What do you mean by this ?’ said her father, angrily. ‘And where’s Anne ?’

'Anne has got a headache, and wants her breakfast taken up to her,' said Ellen, as she sat down complacently and began helping herself, without noticing her mother's distress.

'Tell her she won't get any till she comes for it,' retorted Benham. 'I have no patience with such nonsense! No, wife, I won't have you waiting on her,'—as Mrs. Benham began to prepare a tray. 'If she wants it she can fetch it.'

Poor Mrs. Benham sat down, crying. She had never seen her quiet husband so roused before, and she durst not disobey him.

'I've got sad news, Ellen,' she said. 'Dear grandmother is very bad, and I must go to Dingley at once. You'll be a good girl, and see to father's dinner—and supper, too, if I don't come back.'

Ellen stared at her in dismay.

'You'll be sure to get the potatoes done nicely, and that will do with the bit of cold pork.' And she made her daughter follow her into the pantry, and showed her the day's provisions. 'And don't forget the pigs, Ellen. You know where the wash is kept.'

'I'm sure I can't do it all,' said Ellen, sulkily. 'It's very hard that I'm to have all the work to do, just because Anne says she has got a headache. I wish I had stayed in bed, too!'

It was fortunate for the selfish girl that Benham did not hear her; but he had gone out to his dogs,

and her mother only sighed and continued her directions.

‘I don’t see why grandmother should want you when she has got Aunt Jenny,’ interrupted Ellen, who was roused from her usual indolence by the prospect of so much work. ‘I’m sure Aunt Jenny has nothing else to do but to nurse her. It’s a shame of her to send for you.’

‘Ellen,’ said her mother, really shocked, and as nearly angry as she had ever been with her daughter, ‘it’s a shame of you to talk as you are doing. It would break my heart to be away from poor dear mother now, when she is lying maybe on her death-bed. And, like enough, Jenny wants help in nursing her; so, as father is willing to spare me, I shall stay if I am wanted, and you must do the best you can.’

Ellen sat down sulkily enough to her unfinished cup of tea, and her father came in to wish his wife good-bye, and to tell her that he could not go with her to the train, as he must be off to his work.

‘Take one of the lasses with you,’ he said, ‘and mind you are in time.’

Mrs. Benham went upstairs to prepare for her journey, and there she found Anne still in bed and sobbing violently, complaining that she was neglected and forgotten, and that her father was very cruel and wished to starve her. Ellen was too full of herself and her grievances to think of her sister,

and, indeed, both were so used to their mother's waiting on them that they never thought of sparing her ; so now, though Anne did show a little more feeling than her sister when she heard of her grandmother's illness, yet she let Mrs. Benham carry up her breakfast to her bedside, and exacted so much attendance from her that when the poor woman did at last set off on her walk to the station there was barely time for her to catch the train, and she had all the discomfort of a hot and hurried walk added to her other troubles. •

Half-an-hour after, Ellen Benham was standing idly at the door, watching the passing carts—for it was market-day—and waiting till Anne should come down, to make sure of her doing her share of the work. Presently she saw a neighbouring farmer coming at a sharp trot up the road from the station, while she was wondering why he was in such a hurry he pulled up and called out,—‘ Your mother has had a dreadful accident, and they are bringing her home ! I am going for the doctor ! ’ And he was off again in a moment, while Ellen stood bewildered till Anne's appearance roused her, and she told her the terrible news. Both girls sat down to sob and cry, and neither thought of making any preparation for the poor sufferer's return. The breakfast things were still on the table, unwashed ; the fire was nearly out ; and had not Mrs. Benham taken the precaution of making her

bed before she left, there would have been none ready to receive her.

A sound of wheels and many feet called the daughters to the door, where half the inhabitants of the village had assembled round the spring-cart which had conveyed the poor woman from the station, and in which she lay prostrate, and apparently insensible.

‘Mother! mother!’ shrieked Ellen, but the figure never moved; and then, as she came close, and saw the tidy straw bonnet all battered and crushed, and the shawl and gown wrenched and torn, and stained with blood, she was seized with horror. ‘Oh! she is dead! she is dead!’ she screamed, and Annie joined in her cry.

‘No, my lasses, not so bad as that,’ said the owner of the cart; ‘but she has had a terrible shock, and I’m afraid her leg is broken, so we had better not move her till the doctor comes.’

‘How did it happen?’ asked someone, while a thoughtful neighbour climbed into the cart and began bathing Mrs. Benham’s forehead with vinegar, for she had fainted with pain and fright.

‘Well, I don’t quite know the rights of it, but it seems she was late for the train, and tried to get in after it had started, and her foot slipped, and she fell down between the train and the platform, and the carriage went over her leg. Happily it was the last carriage, or she must have been killed;

and as it is, her leg is badly crushed, and I fear she'll have to lose it.'

By this time Dr. Row had arrived, and under his directions the poor woman was lifted on to a mattress; but though it was all done as carefully and gently as possible, her groans of agony as she was carried into the house were terrible to hear; and her two daughters, who were little used to witness suffering, were completely overcome: one fainting, and the other almost hysterical in her grief. Happily the news of the accident had reached Ferncote Park, and Mrs. Arden and her daughter hurried down, and were of infinite use to the doctor in obeying his directions, and in clearing the room of neighbours, who thought to show their sympathy by crowding round the bed. The doctor then proceeded to examine into the nature of the injuries sustained, and found that the right leg was broken, besides being much crushed, and the shoulder and side were a mass of bruises. It was a sickening sight; but, as the doctor said, it might have been worse, and he trusted that there were no internal injuries, and also that amputation would not be necessary.

While the limb was being set, Miss Arden, by her mother's desire, had gone to telegraph for a nurse to the 'Nurses' Home' at Salisbury, and on her return, hearing loud speaking in the little parlour, looked in, and, to her astonishment, found

Benham almost beside himself with anger, and abusing his two daughters violently, while they cowered before him, terrified at the unusual outbreak.

'What is the matter, Benham? Do think of your poor wife! She must be kept so quiet.'

'Indeed, miss, it is thinking of her that has put me into this state. It makes me nearly mad to think that these wicked girls have all but been the death of her—if, indeed, they haven't quite! Nay, lass, you sha'n't get away,' as Anne tried to escape. 'You deserve to be put to shame.'

'I don't understand what has happened,' said Miss Arden, 'but you can tell me about it—only please speak gently;' and Benham then related how that he had been summoned home by the news that his wife was dead or dying, and that not being permitted to enter the room during the operation he had questioned some of the neighbours about the accident, and had heard from them that she had been late for the train, and had fallen when trying to get in after it had started.

'Then it came to me at once, miss, that she had been hindered at home—for my missus was always terribly afraid of being late for the train, and liked to be there in good time—and sure enough so it was: these wicked girls had stayed in bed and kept her waiting on them.'

'I didn't,' interrupted Ellen, pertly; 'it was Anne.'

'I had a headache,' whined Anne, 'and mother always gives me my breakfast then.'

'And why was Mrs. Benham going to the train?' said Miss Arden.

'She was going to Dingley, miss; her poor mother is took very bad with bronchitis, and she was in great trouble about her. We got a letter this morning to say the doctor had no hopes of her.'

'I am very sorry to hear it,' said the young lady. 'Is her mother still expecting her, do you think?'

'Yes, miss, I should think she would be: or, at least, Jenny would, as she wrote the letter.'

'Then surely some one ought to go and tell them what has happened, for they may hear that it is worse than it really is.'

'Perhaps we had better write a letter,' said Benham, slowly.

'Much better send Anne or Ellen,' replied Miss Arden. 'Perhaps it is hard to send one of them away from her mother now, but you know I have telegraphed to Salisbury for a trained nurse, and I expect an answer any minute; and if one comes you won't want both girls, and perhaps their aunt might be glad of one to help in nursing their grandmother; so why not send Anne, and let her aunt keep her if she likes?'

It is difficult to say which of the girls looked crosser while Miss Arden spoke, and when their father answered that he thought that it would be the best plan, Anne sobbed, and said she wouldn't go to Aunt Jenny, while Ellen muttered that she wasn't going to do all the work.

Miss Arden did not hear them, for just then a telegram was brought in saying that a nurse should arrive that afternoon; but Benham did, and his anger would again have burst forth had not the doctor at that moment come down to tell him that his wife was as comfortable as they could expect, and so anxious to see him that he would be allowed to go up for a few minutes, but that he must be careful not to agitate her.

Benham crept upstairs as gently as he could, and was met by Mrs. Arden at the door. 'She is worrying about her mother expecting her,' she said, 'and is afraid, too, that you are angry with the girls. Whatever you do, don't contradict her, for her life may depend on her being kept quiet and easy in her mind.'

'Father, dear,' said a weak voice from the bed, as Benham passed on into the room, after promising to be most careful and judicious, 'you won't be angry with the children? It was all my fault; I didn't take time enough for the walk. I ought to have minded what you said.'

'My poor, poor Nanny!' said Benham, tenderly,

and calling her by the old pet name that had long been disused for 'missus,' or 'mother.' 'It's hard to forgive those who have brought you to this, but I will try.'

'And, John, there's poor mother and Jenny; perhaps mother may be gone now, and poor Jenny all alone, and waiting for me.'

'Don't ye trouble for that; I'll go over to Dingley this afternoon, and see them, and take Anne with me, and then if Jenny wants her she can stay.'

Mrs. Benham was much relieved; and then, when her husband had told her that 'a nurse-tender' was coming in a few hours, and that he hoped she would soon be about again, he went down leaving her to the rest that the doctor considered so important for her.

Meantime Miss Arden, who had really thought that she was doing Anne a kindness in proposing to remove her from home while her father was so angry with her, was astonished and shocked at the conduct of both girls, and at the amount of selfishness displayed by them. It was a relief to her when the Rector came in, for all that she said about duty to their parents, and giving up their own pleasure and comforts, only provoked sobs, and tears, and sulky looks; and she felt quite disheartened and uncertain how to proceed. However, Mr. Ashton, finding gentle words of no avail, spoke so

sternly of the terrible results of their selfish indulgence, and of the self-reproach that would have been theirs had not God, in His infinite mercy, spared their mother's life, that he at length produced some impression, though he could hardly hope that it would be a permanent one.

Miss Arden struck the iron while it was hot, by suggesting that they should tidy up the place a little, and get their father's dinner, and with the help of a neighbour this was done; and then Anne started with Benham for Dingley, and Ellen remained behind, and was allowed to sit in her mother's room and to watch her while she slept.

Mrs. Arden, who called again in the afternoon, was pleased to find her thus making herself useful.

'You must be so glad, Ellen,' she said, 'to be able to do something for your mother, who has done so much for you; and I am sure that when she wakes up she will be pleased to see you. She has always been so well and strong that I don't think you ever had a chance before of nursing her.'

'I shall be very glad when mother gets well again,' said Ellen bluntly.

'So shall we all,' replied Mrs. Arden; 'but I am afraid that this will be a question of months, and perhaps she may never be the same strong woman
so you must make up your mind to take

your share of the work, and not to be disheartened.'

'It seems so hard, ma'am, that Anne should go visiting and leave me all the work,' said Ellen, still harping on her imaginary grievance.

'I don't think that Anne is going to amuse herself,' said the lady gravely. 'Your grandmother is dangerously ill, as you know, and if she is spared, Anne will, of course, have plenty to do in helping your aunt ; so I think that you have the best of it in being allowed to stay with your mother.'

This was a new idea to Ellen, and she was pleased with it, and when, in the course of the afternoon, her mother roused up a little, she managed to administer the prescribed nourishment, and felt a pleasure that she had never known before in doing so, and in being recognised by the patient with a look of affection. Of course, Mrs. Benham was not left to her inexperienced daughter's nursing ; Mrs. Arden's housekeeper was at hand till the Salisbury nurse arrived, but, at a hint from her mistress, she allowed Ellen to perform all the little offices that she could ; and when, at the end of a couple of hours, the girl's fit of goodness had rather worn itself out, she quietly took her place, and Ellen, who thought she had done wonders, and was really tired with the unusual effort of making herself useful, was glad to be relieved.

Contrary to expectation, Benham brought back a good account that evening from Dingley, where he had left Anne. Old Mrs. Merritt had made a wonderful rally; the bronchitis was subdued; and she sent a message to her daughter, that she hoped to come and see her before long. This news, and the arrival of the Salisbury nurse, whose careful handling was a relief to the bruised and aching frame, combined to give the patient rest, both of mind and body, and her progress was as satisfactory as could possibly be expected. It was, perhaps, as well that she did not see all that went on downstairs. Ellen's fit of activity had sprung more from impulse than principle, and she soon got tired of her daily duties and relapsed into her old ways. It was a bore to get up early to light the fire, in order that the nurse might have hot water (for poor Mrs. Benham, though she could not get up, yet liked to be put tidy at her usual hour for rising), so her mother was kept waiting every morning; and even then the fire was hastily lit, without any cleaning of the grate, which remained in the same state from day to day. It was fortunate for the sick woman that her food all came from the Park, and merely required warming, which the nurse could manage for herself, as the utter irregularity of meals would have seriously retarded her recovery.

Meantime Anne was by no means having a

holiday. Aunt Jenny, who knew her niece's idle ways, had only consented to keep her on condition that she made herself useful, and Anne soon found out that she must exert herself. If she left her bed unmade, so it remained till she went up at night; unless she helped to prepare breakfast, she got none; and her aunt made her take her turn at the wash-tub and in waiting on her grandmother, and kept her so busy that she had no time for headaches. Still, it was not unkindly done, and though she thought she worked very hard there was no denying that her aunt worked harder, while everything was done in an orderly way without any scramble. It was now that Anne found one of her gifts, that of reading aloud distinctly and pleasantly, of much value; and it became as great a pleasure to her as to her grandmother to sit down by the old woman's side and read the Psalms and chapters to her. They often had long talks, too, and Mrs. Merritt, who had grieved over the way in which her grandchildren were brought up, would take occasion to say a word in season; and thanks to her wise and gentle teaching, Anne was awakened to a sense of her faults, and there was reason to hope that she would return home a very different girl.

One day, when she had been to Ferncote for a few hours, the sight of her poor mother's pale, thin face, and her utter helplessness, was a terrible

reproach to her ; and Mrs. Benham's tender anxiety as to whether she was happy, and whether her headaches were properly attended to, seemed to heap coals of fire on her head. On her return she told her grandmother the whole story of the accident, and freely admitted how much she had been to blame.

‘ And, oh, granny ! it seems so dreadful now to think of, but I hadn't really a headache, only I wanted to finish a story I was reading, and so I stayed in bed and made poor mother bring me my breakfast ; and if she hadn't done that, she would have been in time for the train.’

‘ Yes, dear, it does seem very dreadful that what you thought was only a harmless bit of self-indulgence should have so nearly killed your mother. I do trust that it will be a lesson to you, and that you will keep a strict watch upon yourself.’

‘ Yes, granny ; I will try. Do you think it was all my fault ?’

‘ Well—no. Your mother's fault, poor dear, in indulging you, began the harm ; and then Ellen was to blame for not helping her, when she knew how late it was : but after all, Anne, it is not other people's faults but your own that concern you. And if this accident should really make you more anxious to do your duty to your Heavenly Father and to your earthly parents, I don't think your mother will grudge all her pain and suffering. She

loves you so much, and she has always been such a dear, good daughter to me, that I do hope you will try and reward her for it.'

Weeks passed away, and Anne, though quite happy with her kind grandmother and aunt, yet longed to be settled at home, to prove to her mother, by loving care and attention, how sincerely penitent she was for her former negligence and indifference. But while the sick-nurse remained there was hardly room for her, and she was really required at Dingley, where her aunt fell ill rather suddenly, for she thoroughly understood her grandmother's ways, and Aunt Jenny herself owned that she was sure of her mother's being cared for when Anne was there. However, at length, when Jenny was about again, a letter from Benham announced that the 'nurse-tender' was going, and that they wanted Anne back; and old Mrs. Merritt saying that she must go to her daughter, as her daughter couldn't come to her, the two went to Ferncote together.

Thanks to Mrs. Arden's kindness, the nurse had been retained much longer than Benham could have afforded to keep her, so the patient had not been neglected; and neighbours had sometimes come in to help Ellen, so the house ought not to have looked as it did when Mrs. Benham first came downstairs.

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' adding all unnecessary exertions. 'The injured
leg had become shorter than the other, and it was
evident that she would always be more or less of a
cripple. In point of fact, the bruises had been
more painful and more serious than the fracture,
and had done more real mischief, so that recovery
was a slow and tedious process. It was a touching
meeting between Mrs. Merritt and her daughter:
each had been near to death's door, and each was
so thankful to see the other again.

'I never thought we should have met again this
side of the grave, mother.'

'No, dear, but God has spared us mercifully.
Maybe He has work for us to do yet, though we
seem so helpless.' And her eyes filled with tears
as she saw how her daughter was changed from a

comely, prosperous-looking woman, to a pale, emaciated invalid.

Anne, for her part, when she saw Ellen's careless neglect of her mother's comfort, was much shocked, and did all she could to make amends. But she did not like to remonstrate with her sister, for she remembered only too well that she herself had set the bad example; and yet, when Ellen laughed at her for her 'fidgets' and 'fussiness,' and talked of 'new brooms sweeping clean,' it was difficult to keep back the sharp answer that rose to her tongue.

Mrs. Merritt was only able to stay a few days, and when she went Anne accompanied her to the station, having first arranged her mother comfortably on the couch, and begged Ellen to make up the fire, which was getting low.

Ellen, who was busy trimming a bonnet, and very cross at the interruption, went down to the parlour, and bundled a lot of sticks on to the fire, and returned to her occupation, without paying any attention to her mother's remark that it wasn't safe to put so much wood on the grate at once.

She was so absorbed in her millinery that she saw and heard nothing till Anne rushed into the room, to tell her that she was going for the doctor at once, as 'mother's leg had broken again.' If not so bad as that, still serious mischief had been done,

and Ellen found, with real dismay, that it was all traceable to her. Mrs. Benham had always been nervous about fire, and now, in her weak state, she was even more so than usual. The sticks that Ellen had so carelessly put on began to splutter and blaze; sparks and fragments flew out continually, and at length a large one set fire to the carpet, and though there was no absolute flame it did not go out, and there was a strong smell of burning.

Poor Mrs. Benham called and called in vain for Ellen, and at length, rendered desperate by fright, got hold of her crutches and tried to raise herself; but in her haste and nervousness she threw her weight on the injured leg, which instantly gave way, and she fell on the smouldering carpet, unable to help herself or to put out the still burning twig, and there Anne found her on her return from the station.

The girl was not strong enough to lift her, and was, besides, afraid of doing harm, so, after extinguishing the burning fragment, and calling Ellen down to remain with and soothe her mother, she rushed off for the doctor, and happily met him on the road, so that no time was lost. It was a most unfortunate accident. Mrs. Benham was again a prisoner to her bed, and had again to go through all the pain of an operation, with health and nerves already weakened by long confinement, so that she

could hardly be expected to recover as well a second time. It was now that Anne's value as a nurse appeared, and Ellen, who was at length thoroughly humbled and softened, was so ready to assist her that the doctor consented to their taking charge of their mother; and with occasional help from their neighbours they managed so nicely that neither the invalid nor their father had any cause for complaint. Their grandmother, who had quite recovered her health, came over one day to see how they were getting on, and was delighted to find 'her girl,' as she called Anne, doing so well; and she had a kind word for Ellen, too.

Poor Ellen was in a very humble frame of mind. Every day, when she dusted the parlour, the large hole burnt in the carpet seemed to speak to her of her fault, and she said so as she showed it to her grandmother.

'Yes, my dear, it is a useful reminder for you, if ever you feel lazy or disobliging. How little you thought, when you saved yourself trouble by putting on too much wood, that you would lay your mother up for weeks, and run the risk of burning the house down! Mr. Ashton said, just now, that a whole city in America was burnt down because children played with matches, or a lamp was upset—he forgot which; but that seemingly trifling accident cost many lives, and made thousands of people homeless beggars. So much harm may be done

by what people call a trifle. But now, my dears, I must tell you what real pleasure it has given me to see you both so attentive to your mother. Indeed, you will never repent of it. When I was a girl I think I may say I was a good daughter, and tried to do my duty by my parents; and yet, when I stood by my dear mother's coffin, and remembered the many times I had obeyed her unwillingly, or thought more of my own comfort than of hers, it was a sharp pain to me to think that it was too late now to make amends, and that the opportunities I had neglected for showing my love to her would never return. And though it was years and years ago—for I was no older than you—I feel the pain now; though I take comfort to think that before long, please God, I shall see my dear mother again.'

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